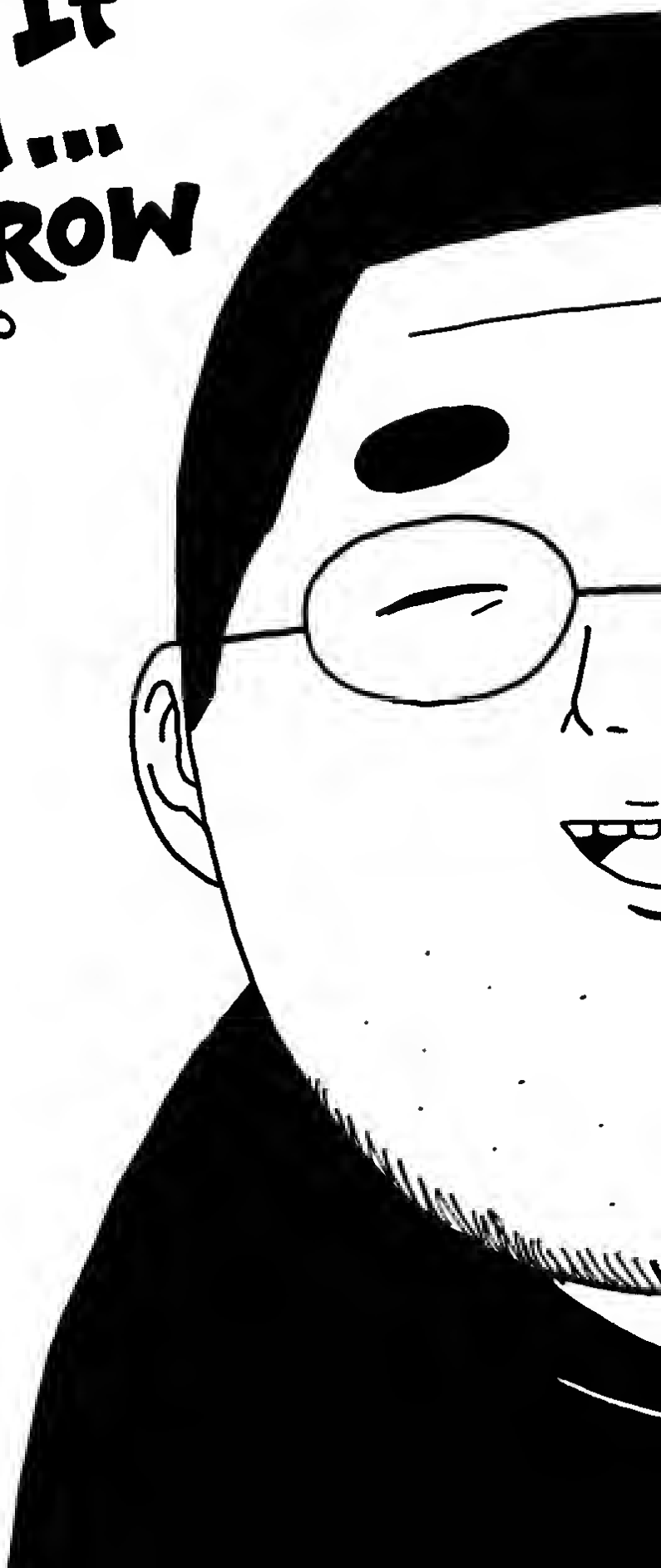
I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow

BY SHUNJU AONO

5

I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow

BY SHUNJU AONO



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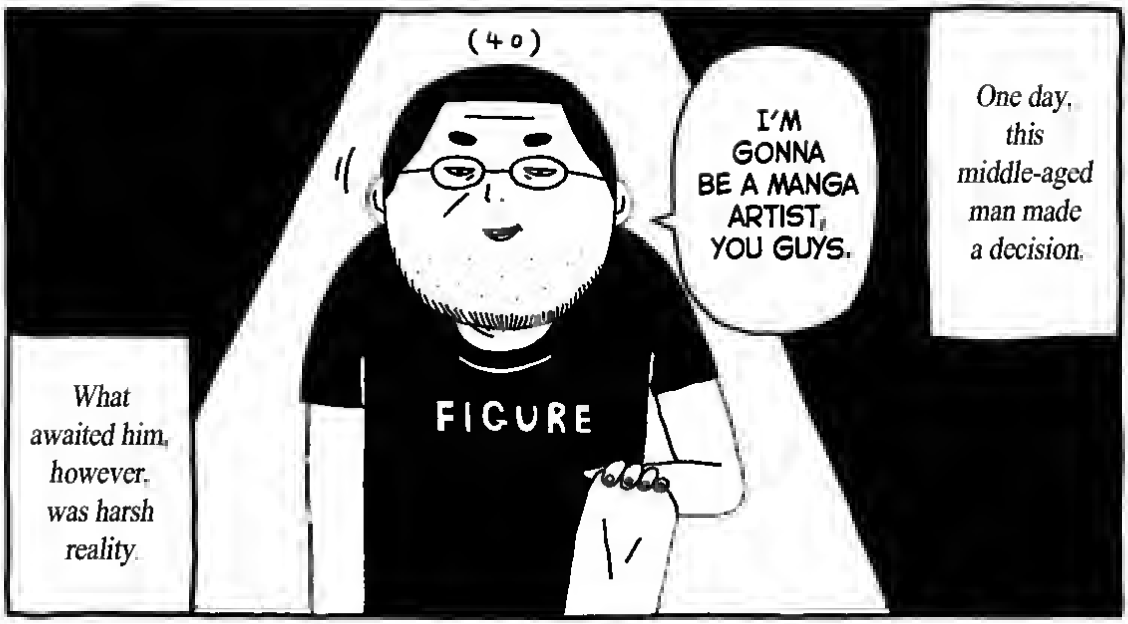
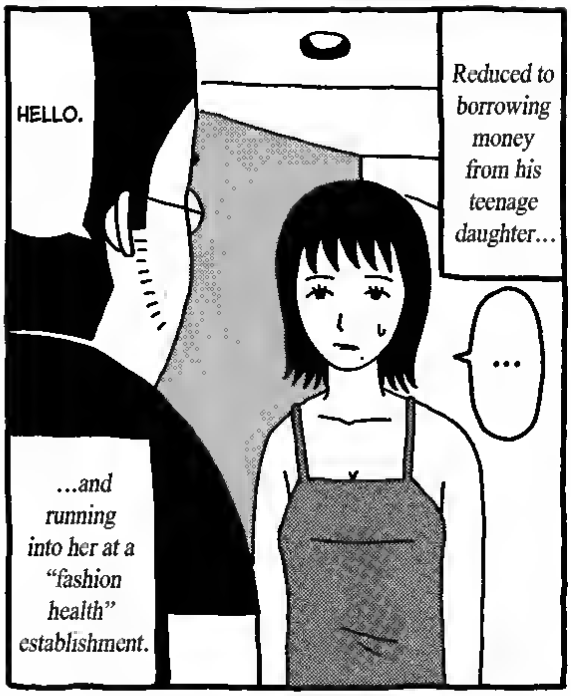
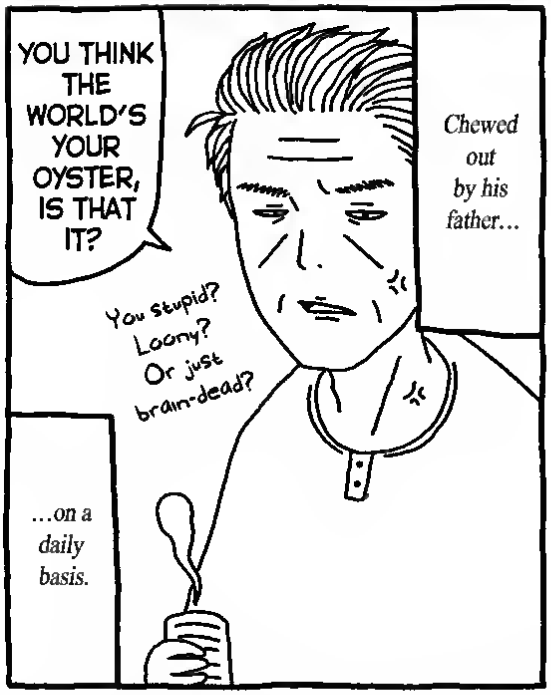
A Brief Recap of the Story So Far (Vols. 1-4)


(40)
I'M GONNA BE A MANGA ARTIST, YOU GUYS.
FIGURE
One day, this middle-aged man made a decision.
What awaited him, however, was harsh reality.

Shizuo Oguro, our protagonist. This declaration, made to his family after he quit his job at the age of 40, is what set this story in motion.



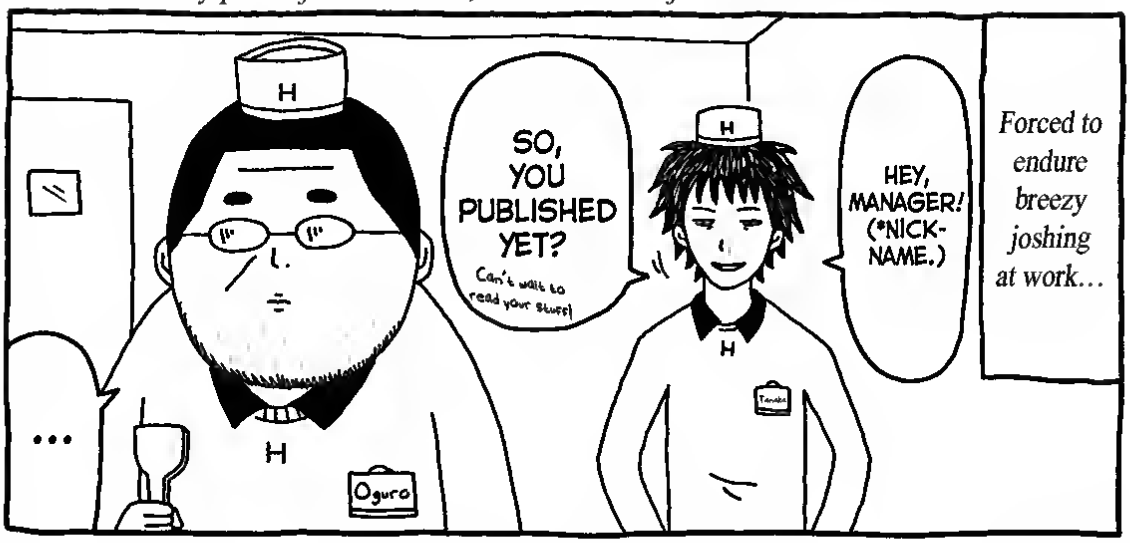
Shizuo's daughter, Suzuko. While nonplussed by Shizuo's announcement, she watches over him as he pursues his dream. (And she quit that job turning tricks).

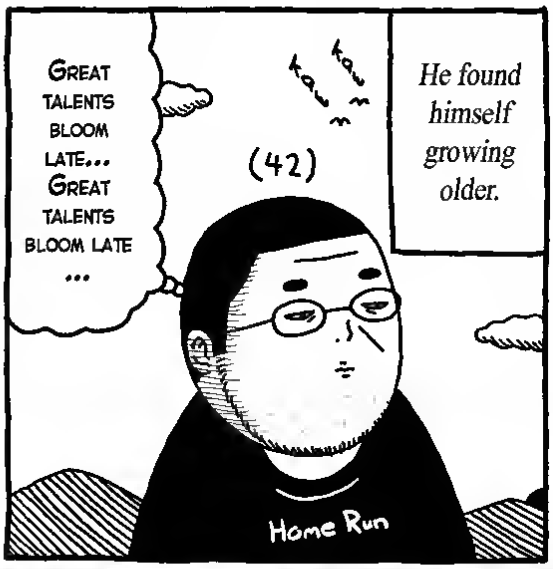


Shizuo's father, Shiro. Can't help giving Shizuo a tongue-lashing every time he sees him. Likes green tea. Gets along well with Ichinosawa (see next page).

Tanaka, Shizuo's co-worker (way younger than him, but paid more). Constantly pokes fun at Shizuo, but more out of a natural callousness than ill will.

Shizuo works at a fast food joint called "H Burgers" which is starting to employ more foreigners recently. Suzuko's favorite singer, afro, walked in once as a customer (see Extra section, Vol. 4).





I'M STARTING TO THINK THERE ISN'T A SINGLE GENRE THAT YOU CAN'T DO, AM I RIGHT?
You might just be a genius!
Buttered up by his editor...
...only to see every piece rejected.
EKKE

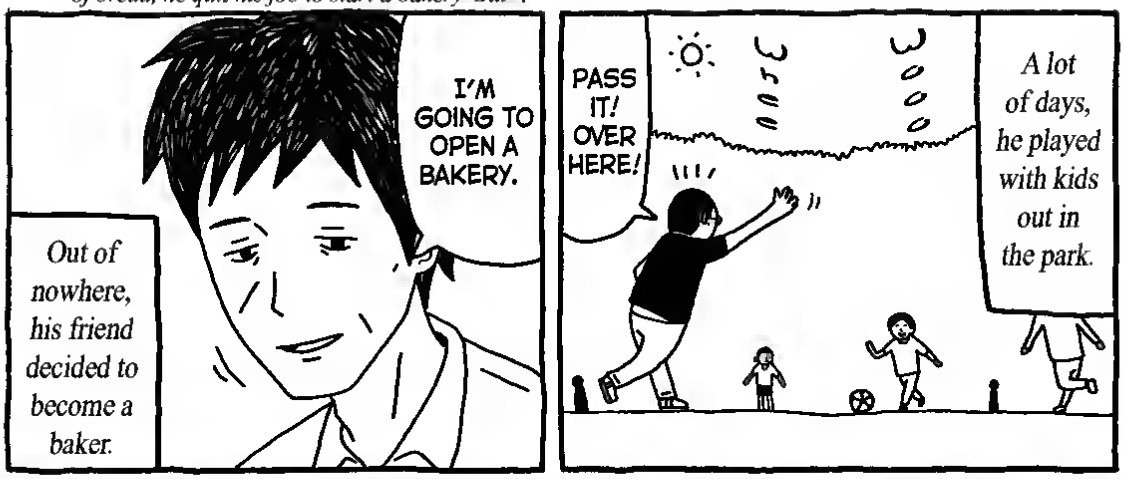
Murakami, Shizuo's mild-mannered first editor at the monthly manga magazine EKKE. Although he always found only good things to say about Shizuo's work for some reason none of it ever got published (see Bonus Chapter, Vol. 3).

Shuichi Ichinosawa, a young man who can't keep a job for more than a few days. Met Shizuo during his ultra-short stint at H Burgers and suddenly got roped into his life.

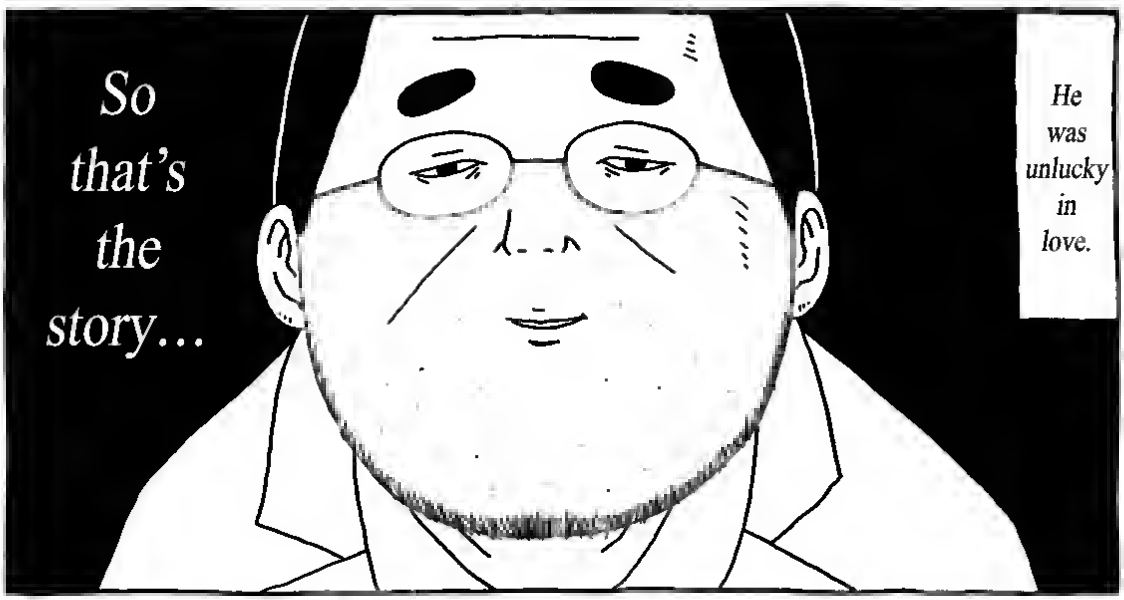
Left home after a big fight with his dad, Shiro, but had nowhere to go. Finally showed up at the door of Ichinosawa, whom he'd met at H Burgers (see Vol. 2, Chapter 6).

Shizuo's friend from grade school, Miyata Divorced, he only gets to see his young son once in a while. Because of his son's love of bread, he quit his job to start a bakery But .

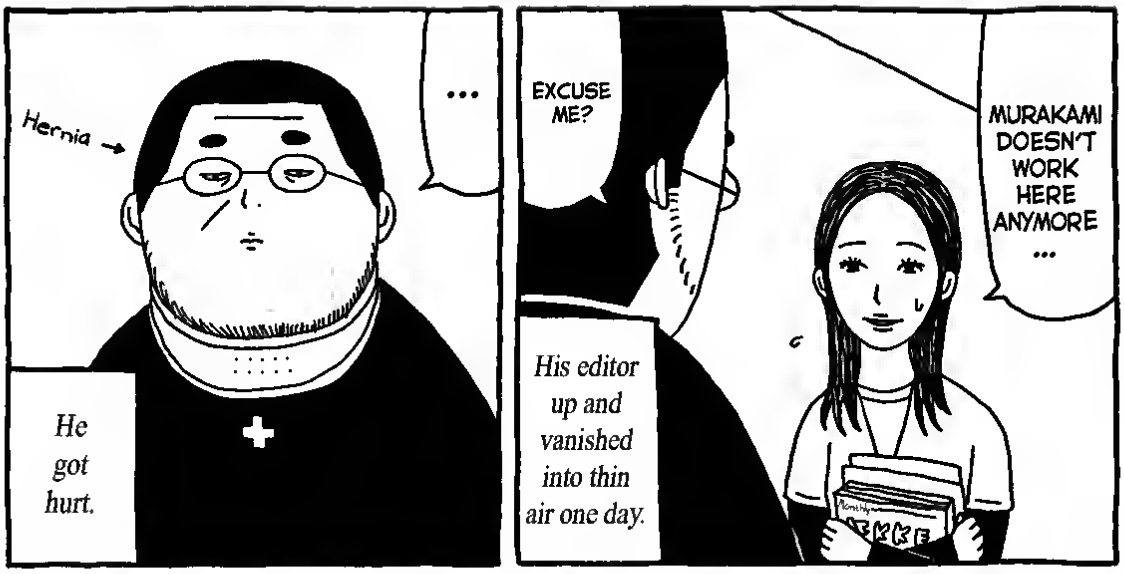
Shizuo's hobbies are soccer (with children at the park) and soccer video games (alone at home).


I'M GOING TO OPEN A BAKERY.
Out of nowhere, his friend decided to become a baker.
PASS IT! OVER HERE!
A lot of days, he played with kids out in the park.

To get over the heartbreak, Shizuo went mountain climbing (see Vol. 3, Chapter 14).



Just when he was finally about to be published, Shizuo hit rock bottom (see Vol. 3, Chapter 16). This pretty young woman, by the way, is Meguro-san, a colleague of Shizuo's editor Murakami. Shizuo couldn't help asking her out.



A hernia is a condition in which one of the discs of cartilage that serve as cushions between the vertebrae slips out of place and puts pressure on the spinal cord, causing pain and tingling. In Shizuo's case, this happened in his neck and was caused by age (see Vol. 4, Chapter 21).

When you're middle-aged, 95% of your life is made up of failure.
...
...I'M BRUTALLY HONEST.
However, you can stake it all on that last 5%...
WON'T YOU STAY WITH ME?
STICK WITH ME AND HELP ME GET PUB-LISHED ...
AS YOU KNOW.

Shizuo's second editor at EKKE, Aya Unami. Seeing in Shizuo a parallel to her own father, a novelist who keeps on writing in spite of commercial failure, she is very harsh with him at first... but decides to continue working with him after her father's death (see the end of Vol. 4).

The End (of the Recap)

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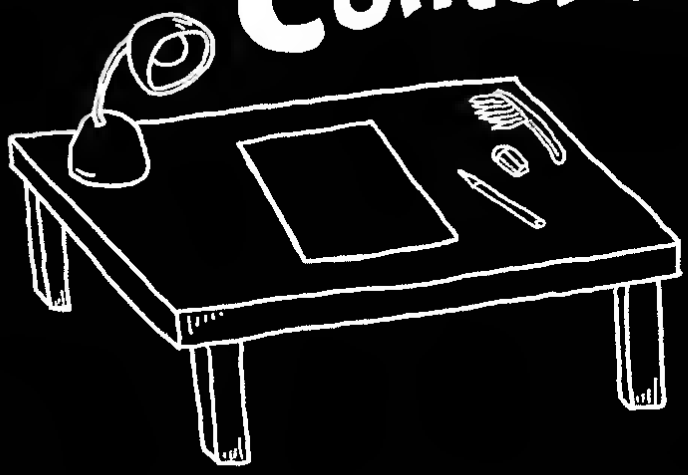

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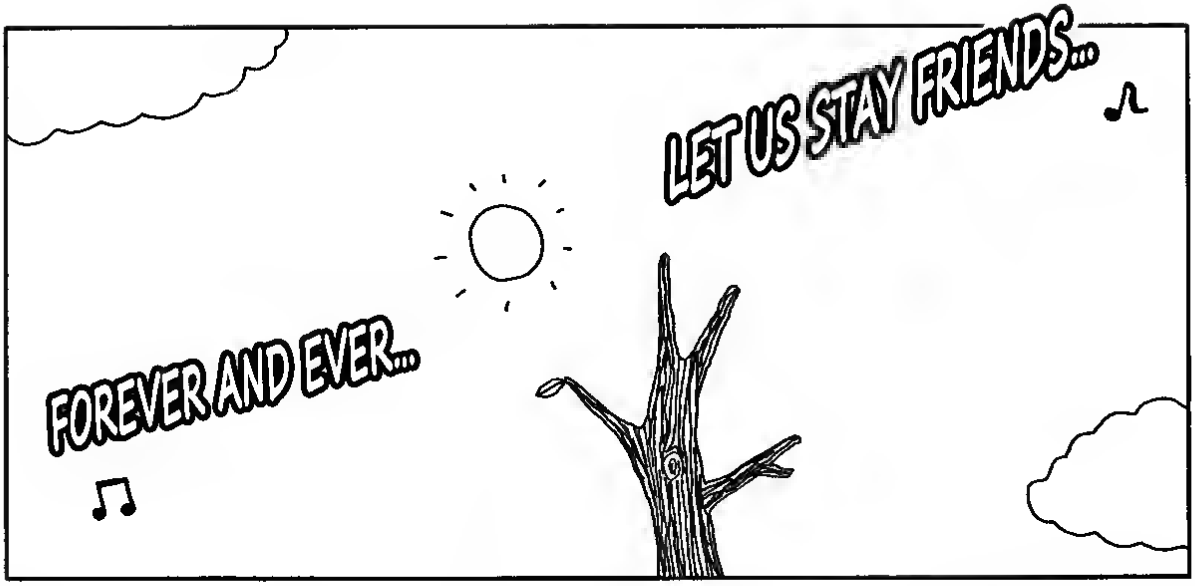
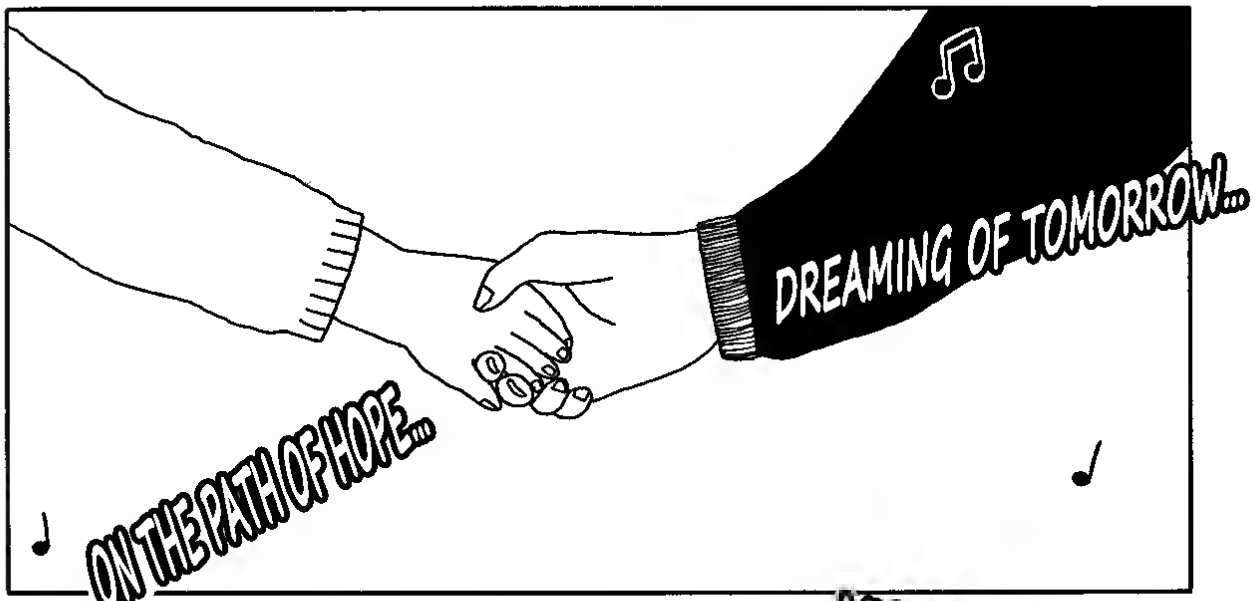
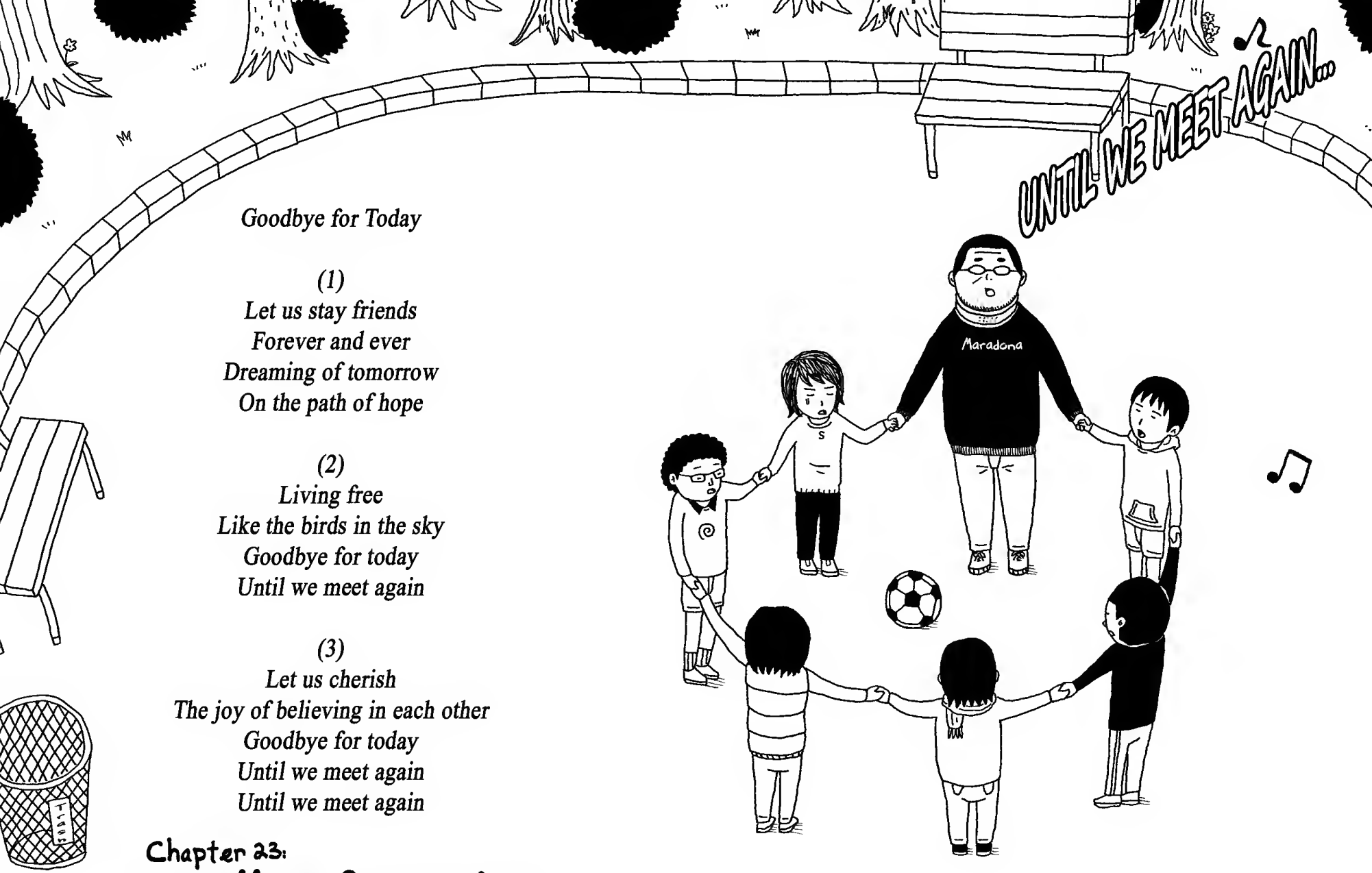




Chapter 23: Goodbye for Today



Goodbye for Today

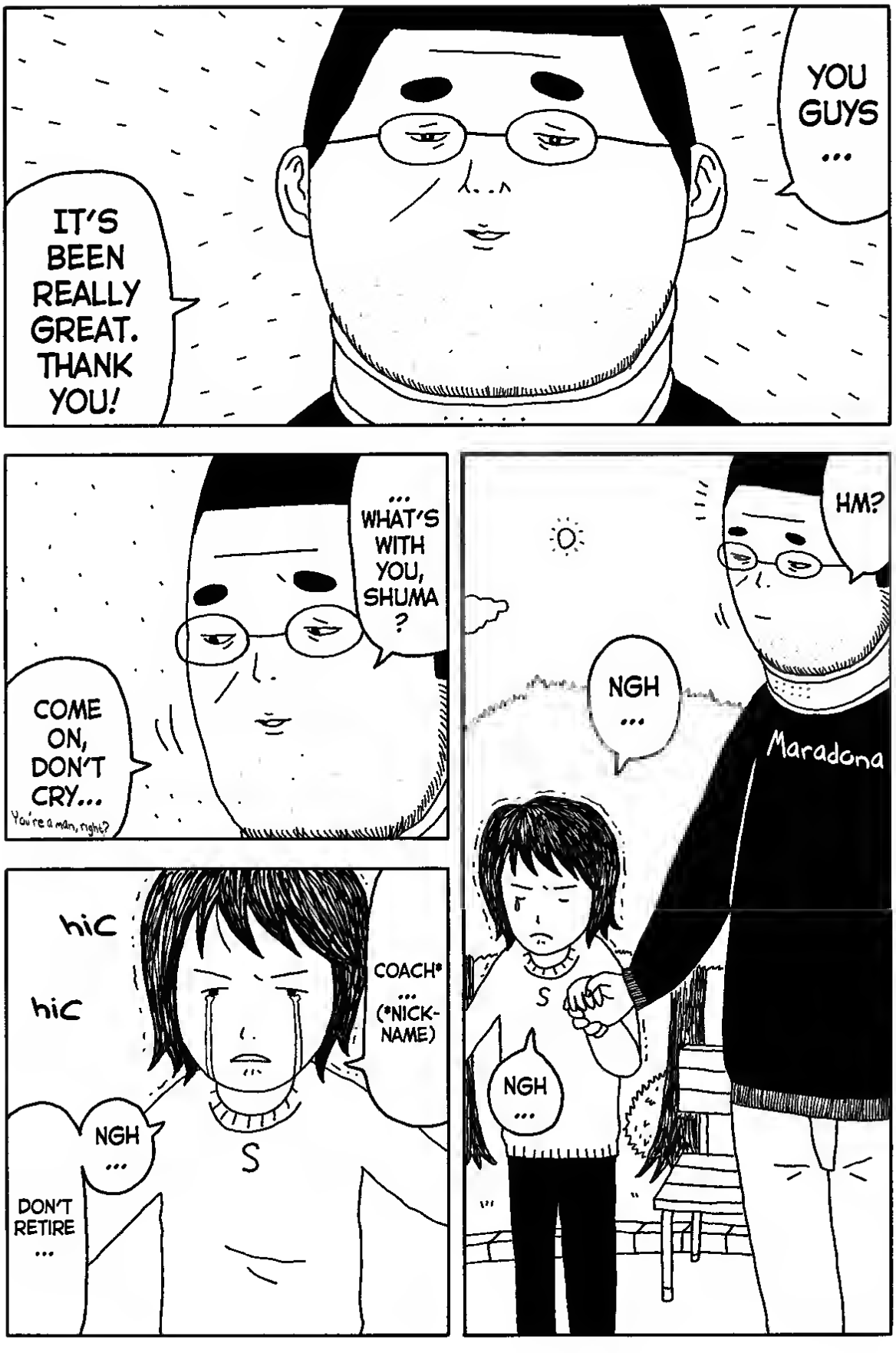
(1)
Let us stay friends
Forever and ever
Dreaming of tomorrow
On the path of hope

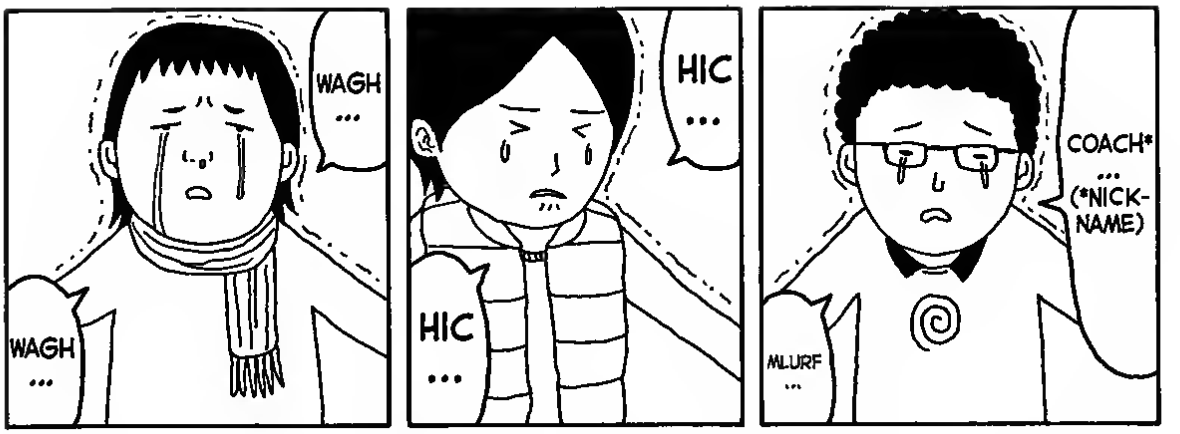
(2)
Living free
Like the birds in the sky
Goodbye for today
Until we meet again

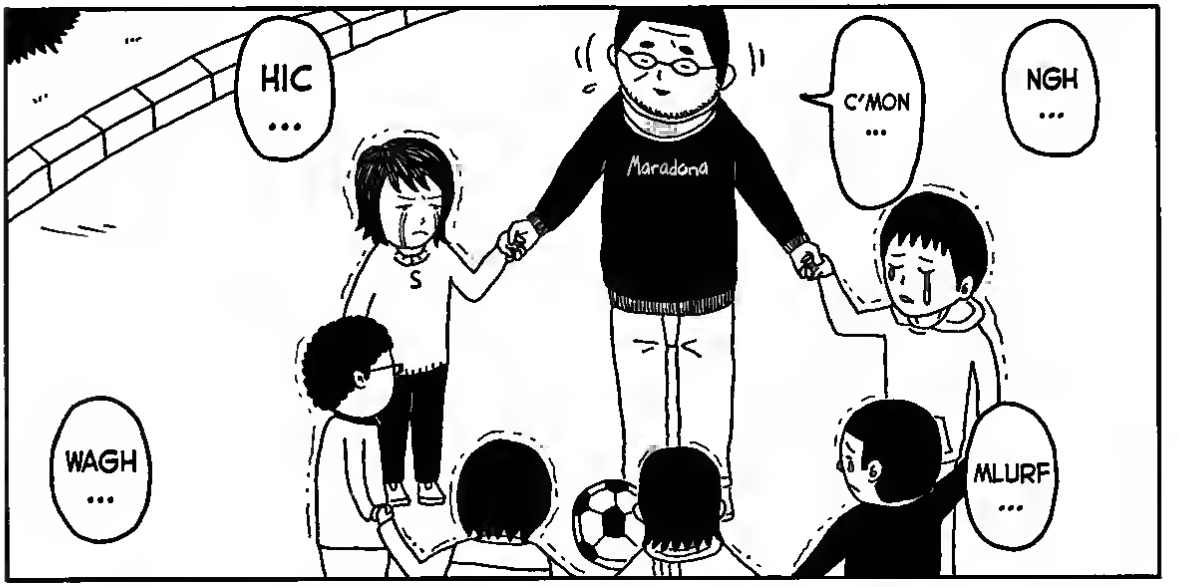
(3)
Let us cherish
The joy of believing in each other
Goodbye for today
Until we meet again
Until we meet again

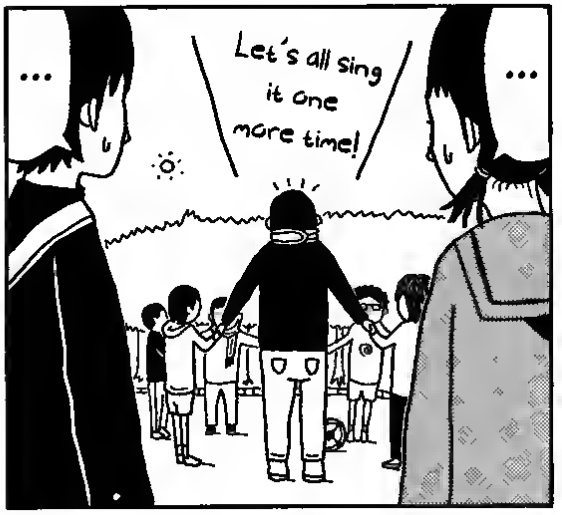
Chapter 23:

Goodbye for Today

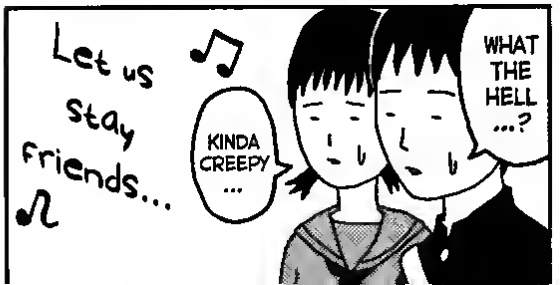

YOU GUYS ...
IT'S BEEN REALLY GREAT. THANK YOU!
... WHAT'S WITH YOU, SHUMA?
COME ON, DON'T CRY...
You're a man, right?
HM?
NGH ...
Maradona
hic
hic
COACH* ... (*NICK-NAME)
NGH ...
DON'T RETIRE ...


WAGH ...
WAGH ...
HIC ...
HIC ...
COACH* ... (*NICK-NAME)
MLURF ...


HIC ...
WAGH ...
Maradona
C'MON ...
NGH ...
MLURF ...

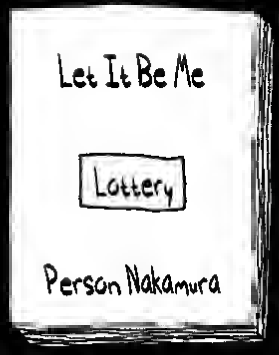

Let's all sing it one more time!

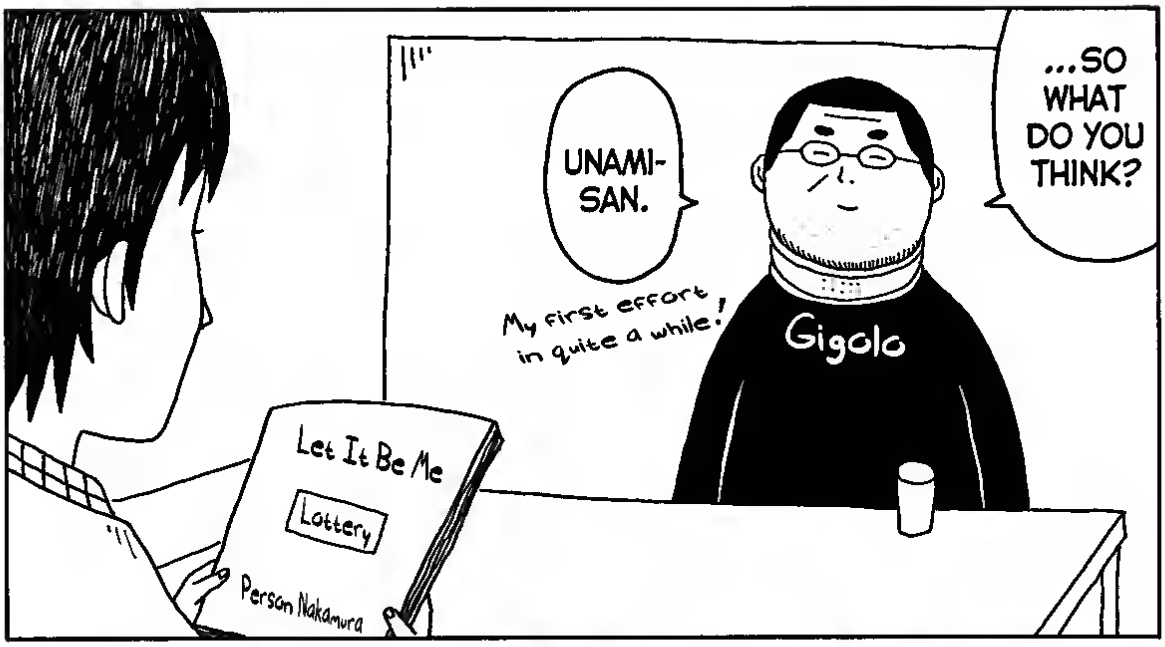
Sorry...
I'LL REALLY MISS YOU GUYS!
BUT I NEED TO PROVE THAT WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO THE CRUNCH, I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES... As a man...
Snif...

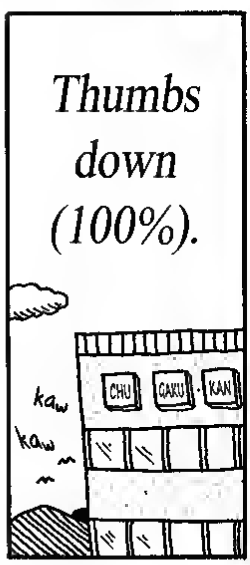

Let us stay friends...
KINDA CREEPY ...
WHAT THE HELL ...?

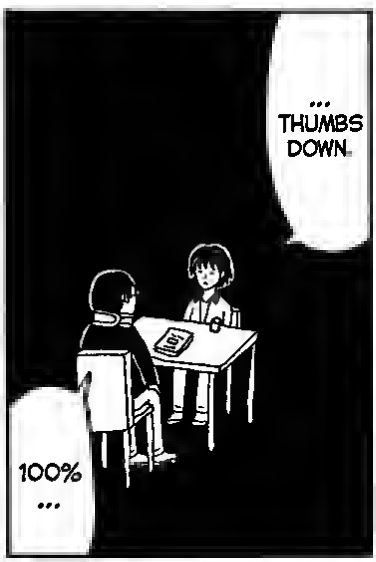
Let It Be Me (32 pages)

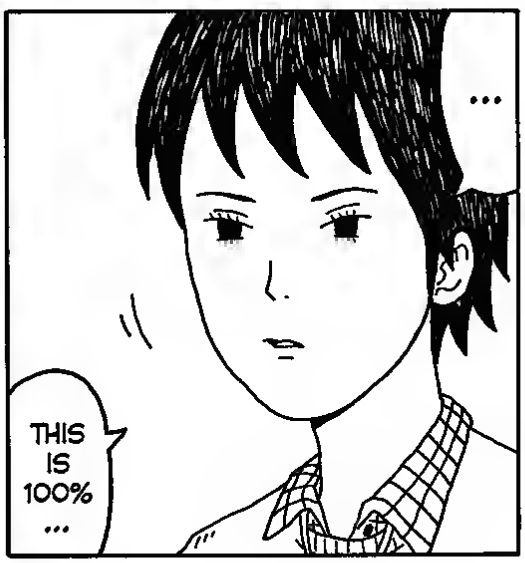
"First, I'll build a house…and buy a car…"
The protagonist (25) buys
a lottery ticket and fantasizes endlessly
about what he'll do with
the money if he wins…
End of story.





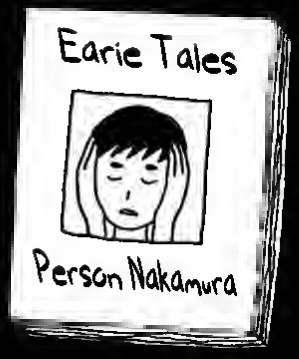


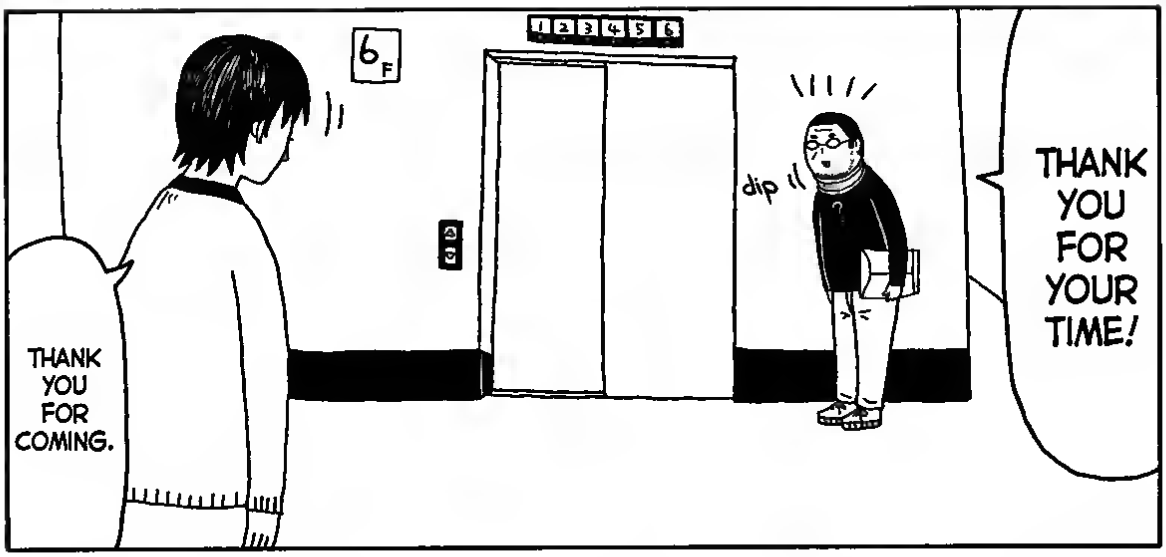


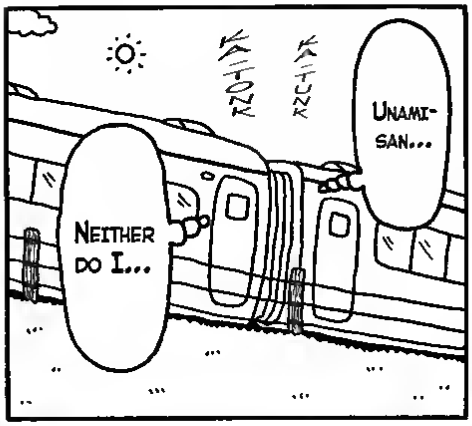


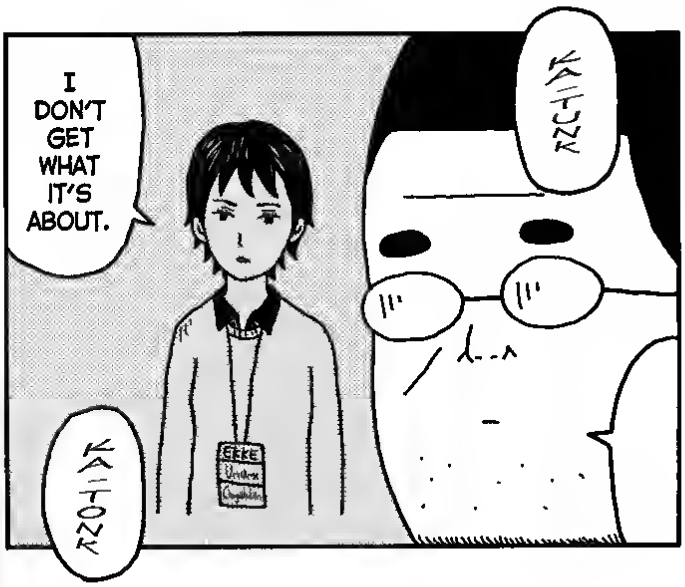
Earie Tales (32 pages)

One day, the protagonist (23) suddenly starts hearing a mysterious voice inside his ear. Led by this mysterious voice, he wanders into a maze… and encounters mystery after mystery after mystery! The story ends without a single mystery explained.





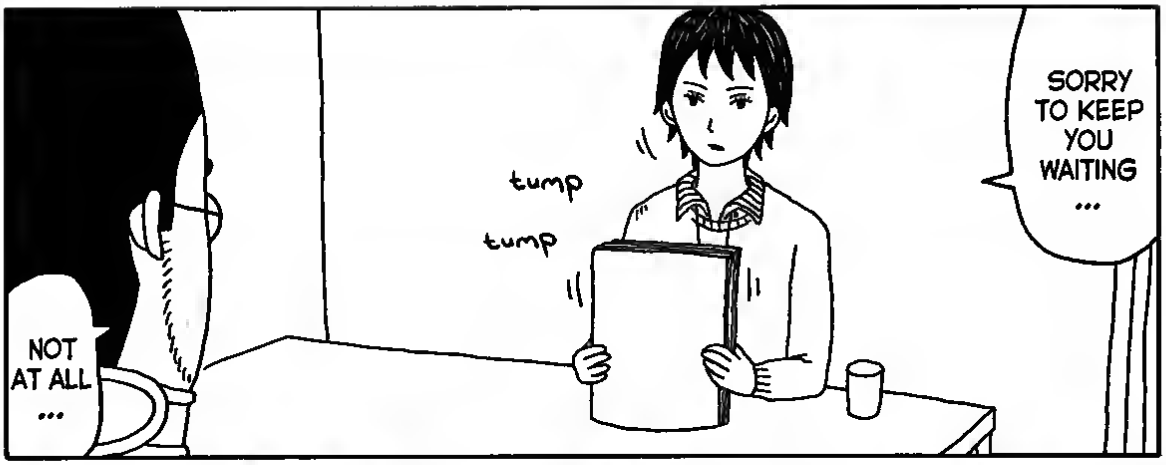




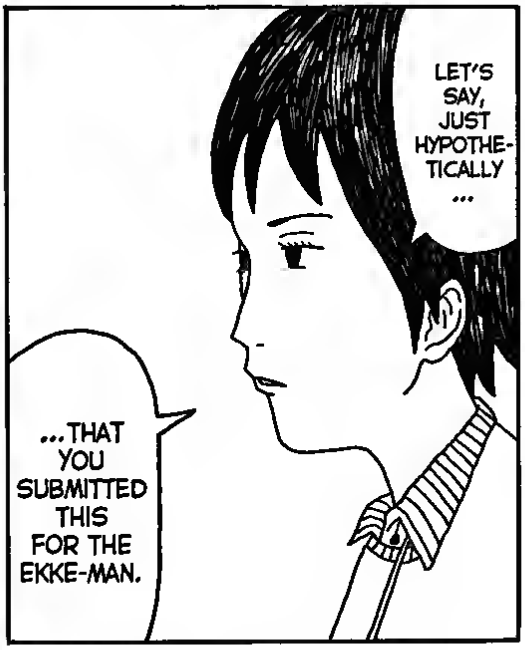
By mutual agreement, Thumbs Down.

Timesleep! (30 pages)

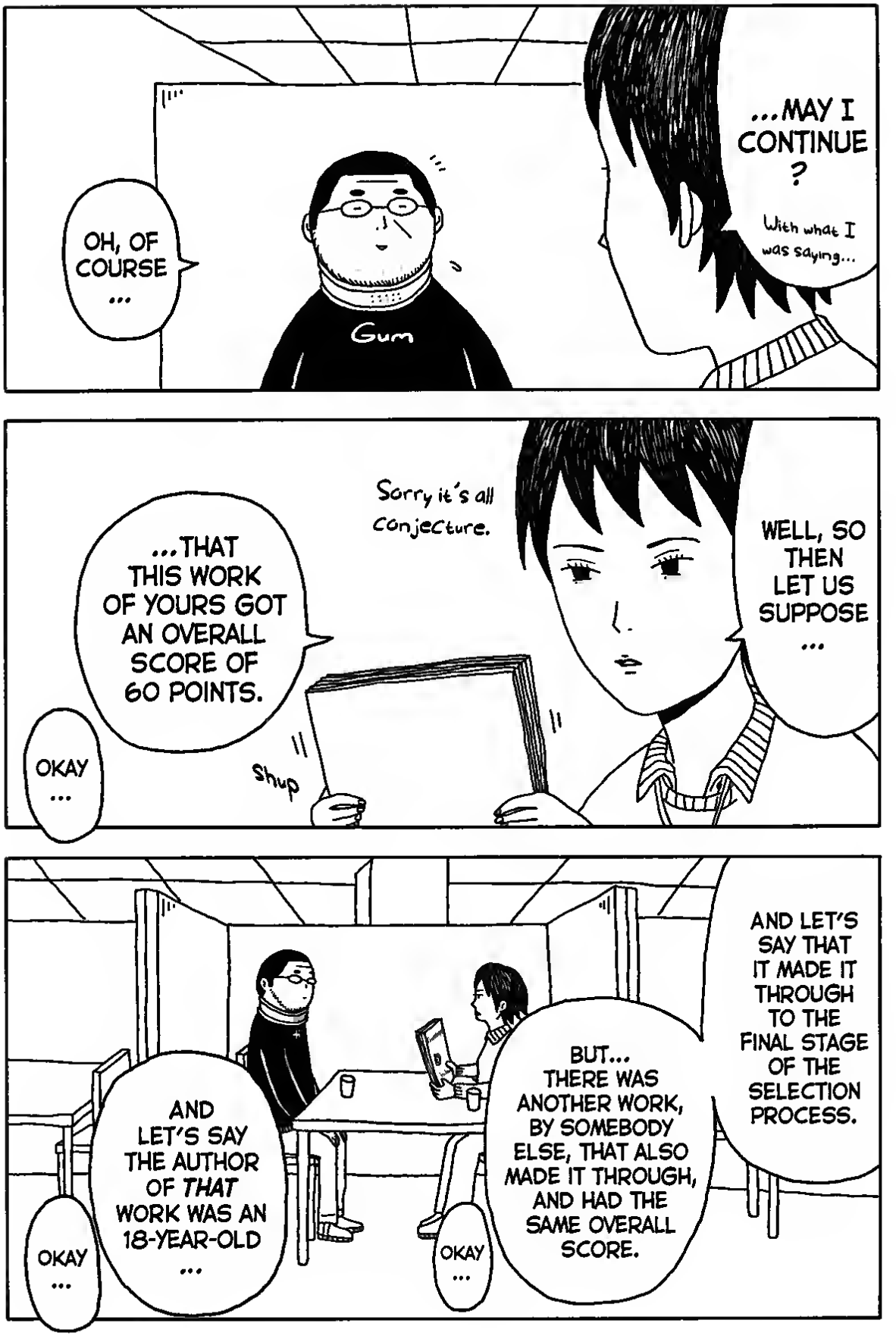
One day, the slacker protagonist (30) awakes to find he has timeslipped into the past… Falling asleep to awake in the present, then sleeping again to wake up once more in the past, he moves back and forth in time, taking stock of his life… Finally, at the end, the earth suddenly explodes.

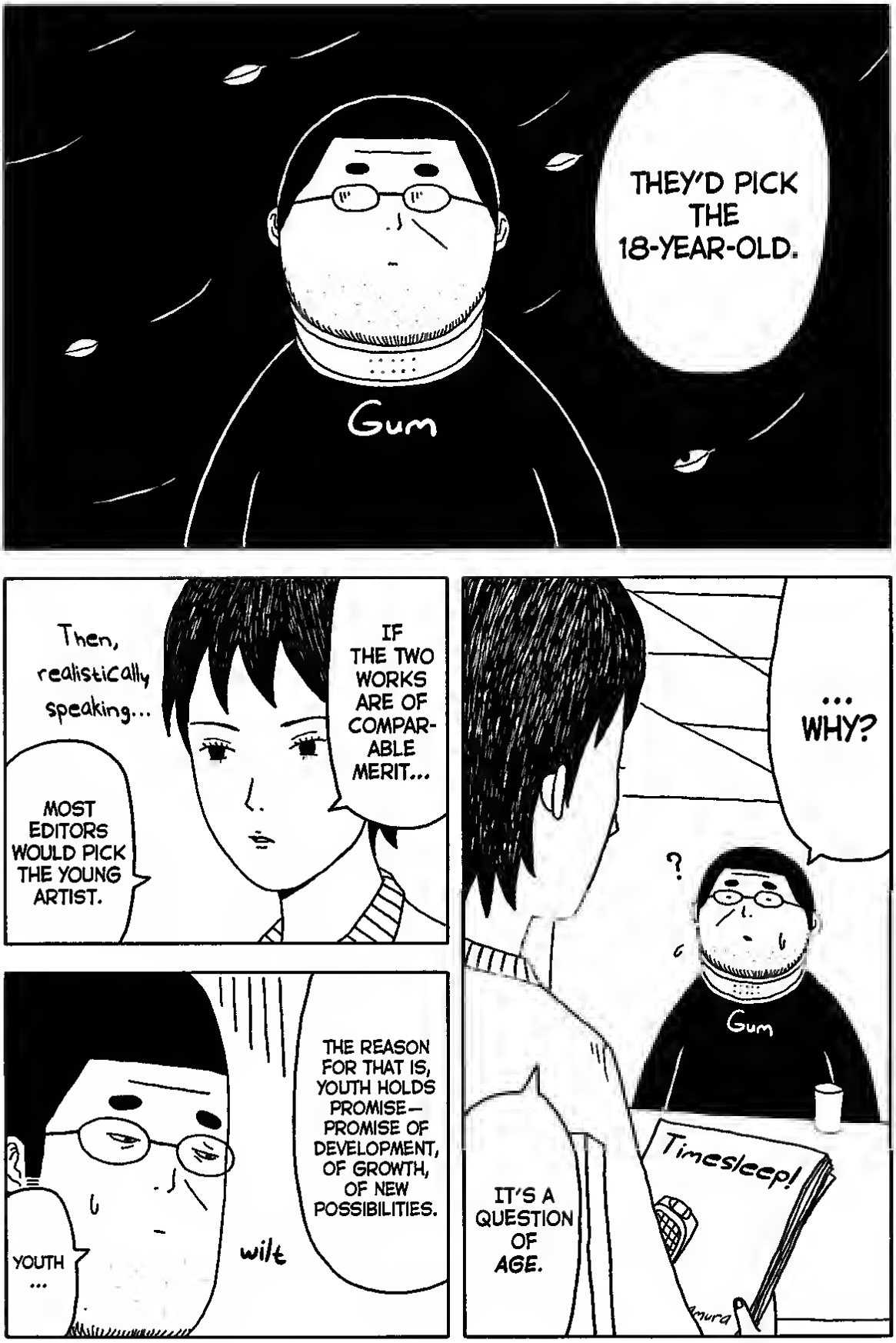


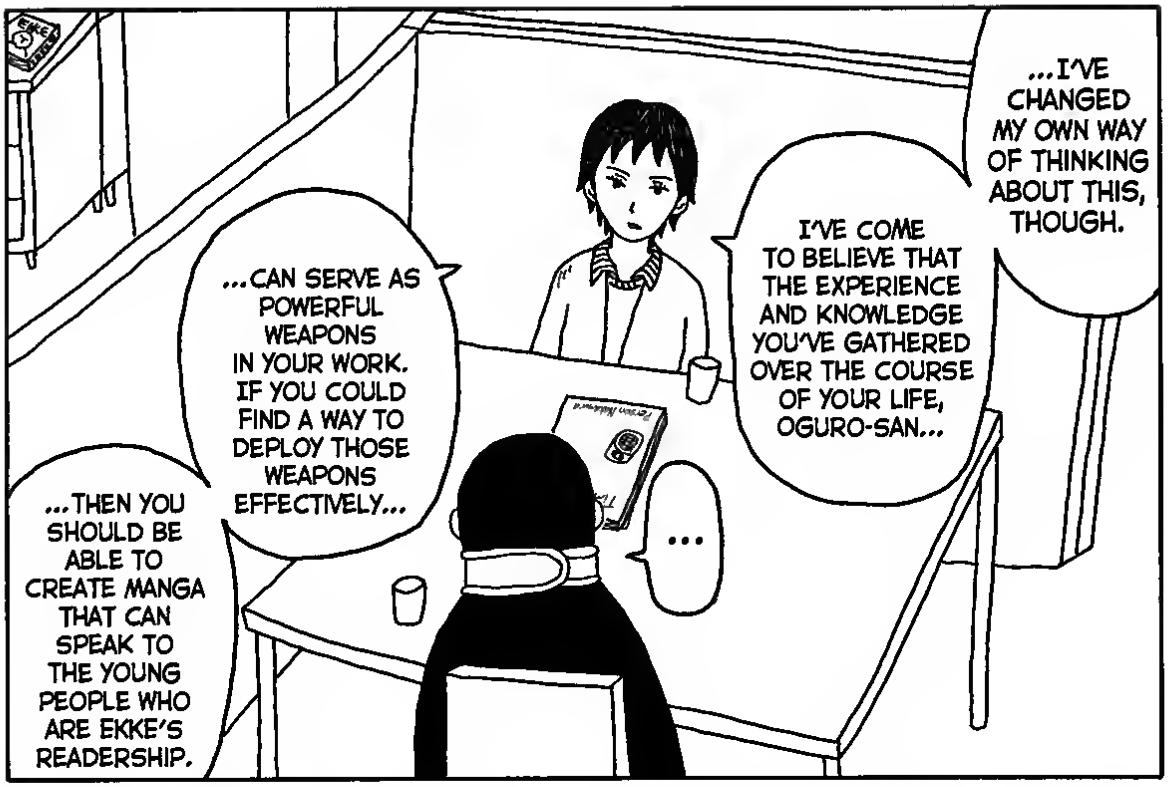
De facto Thumbs Down.

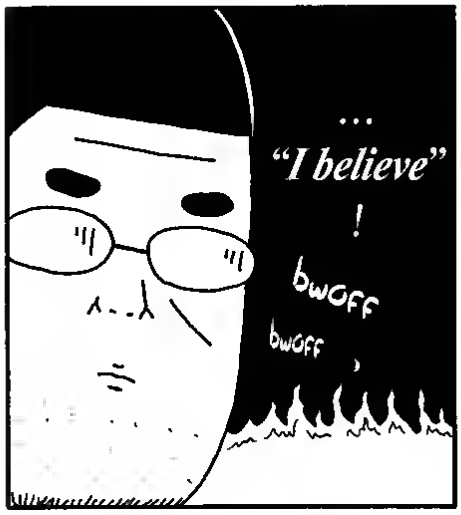


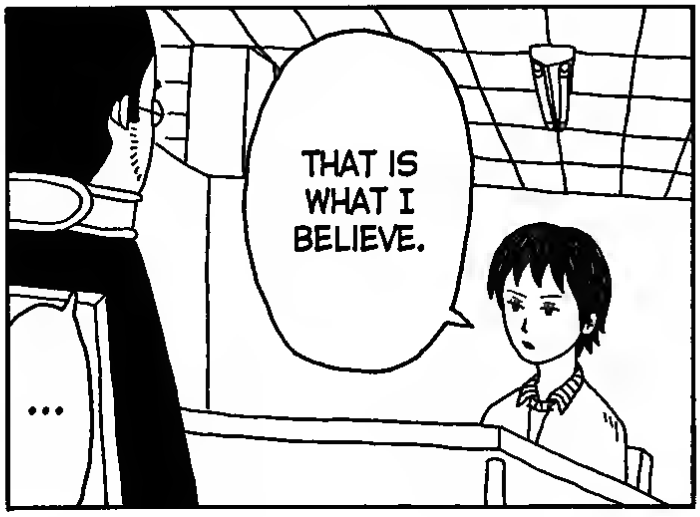
EKKE-man: the Newcomer's Award in EKKE's regular manga contest.

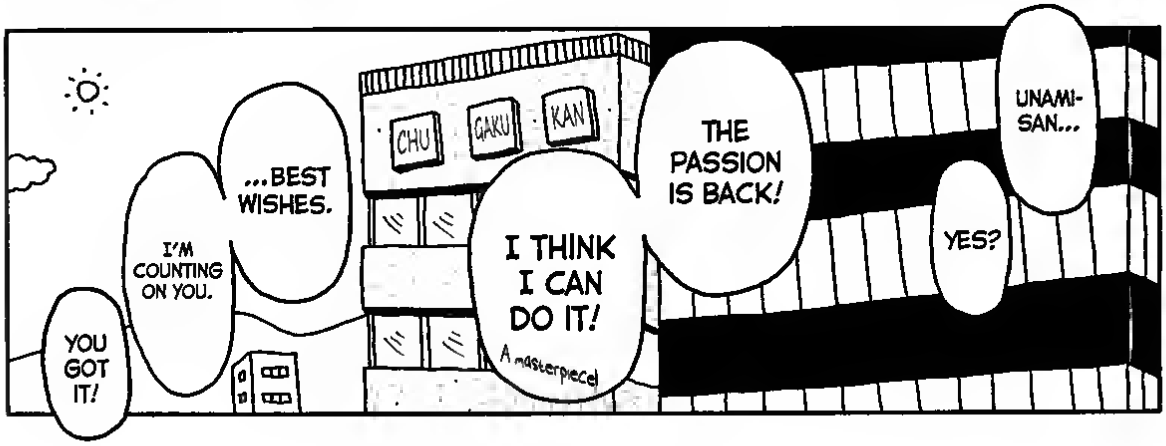

...MAY I CONTINUE?
With what I was saying...
OH, OF COURSE ...
Gum
WELL, SO THEN LET US SUPPOSE ...
Sorry it's all conjecture.
...THAT THIS WORK OF YOURS GOT AN OVERALL SCORE OF 60 POINTS.
Shup
OKAY ...
AND LET'S SAY THAT IT MADE IT THROUGH TO THE FINAL STAGE OF THE SELECTION PROCESS.
BUT... THERE WAS ANOTHER WORK, BY SOMEBODY ELSE, THAT ALSO MADE IT THROUGH, AND HAD THE SAME OVERALL SCORE.
OKAY ...
AND LET'S SAY THE AUTHOR OF *THAT* WORK WAS AN 18-YEAR-OLD ...
OKAY ...

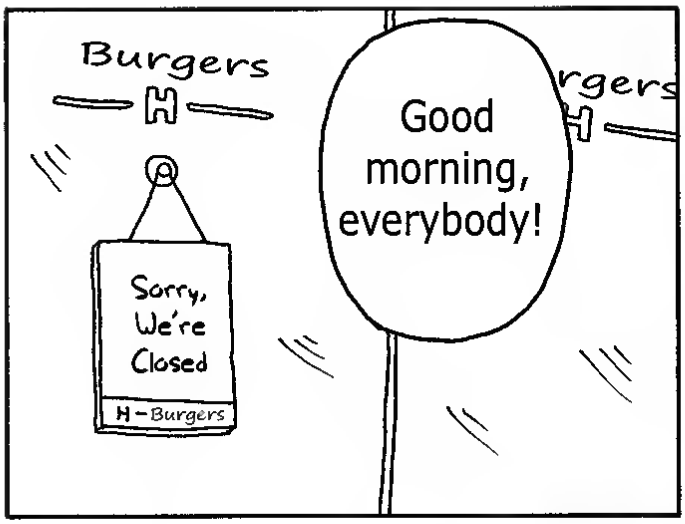

THEY'D PICK THE 18-YEAR-OLD.
Gum
Then, realistically speaking...
IF THE TWO WORKS ARE OF COMPARABLE MERIT...
MOST EDITORS WOULD PICK THE YOUNG ARTIST.
THE REASON FOR THAT IS, YOUTH HOLDS PROMISE— PROMISE OF DEVELOPMENT, OF GROWTH, OF NEW POSSIBILITIES.
wilt
YOUTH ...
...WHY?
?
Gum
Timesleep!
IT'S A QUESTION OF AGE.
Amura

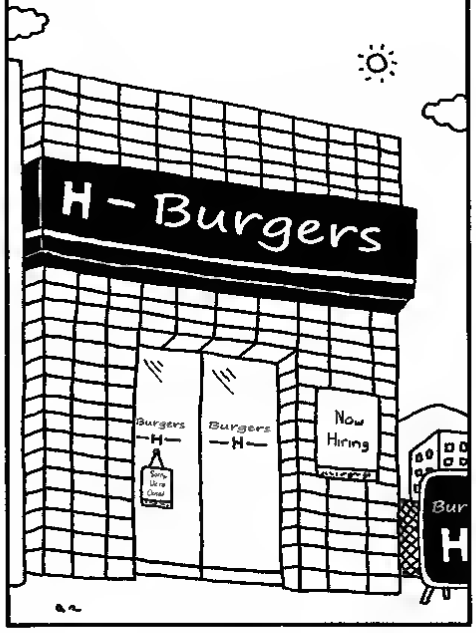

...I'VE CHANGED MY OWN WAY OF THINKING ABOUT THIS, THOUGH.
I'VE COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE YOU'VE GATHERED OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE, OGURO-SAN...
...
...CAN SERVE AS POWERFUL WEAPONS IN YOUR WORK. IF YOU COULD FIND A WAY TO DEPLOY THOSE WEAPONS EFFECTIVELY...
...THEN YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CREATE MANGA THAT CAN SPEAK TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE EKKE'S READERSHIP.

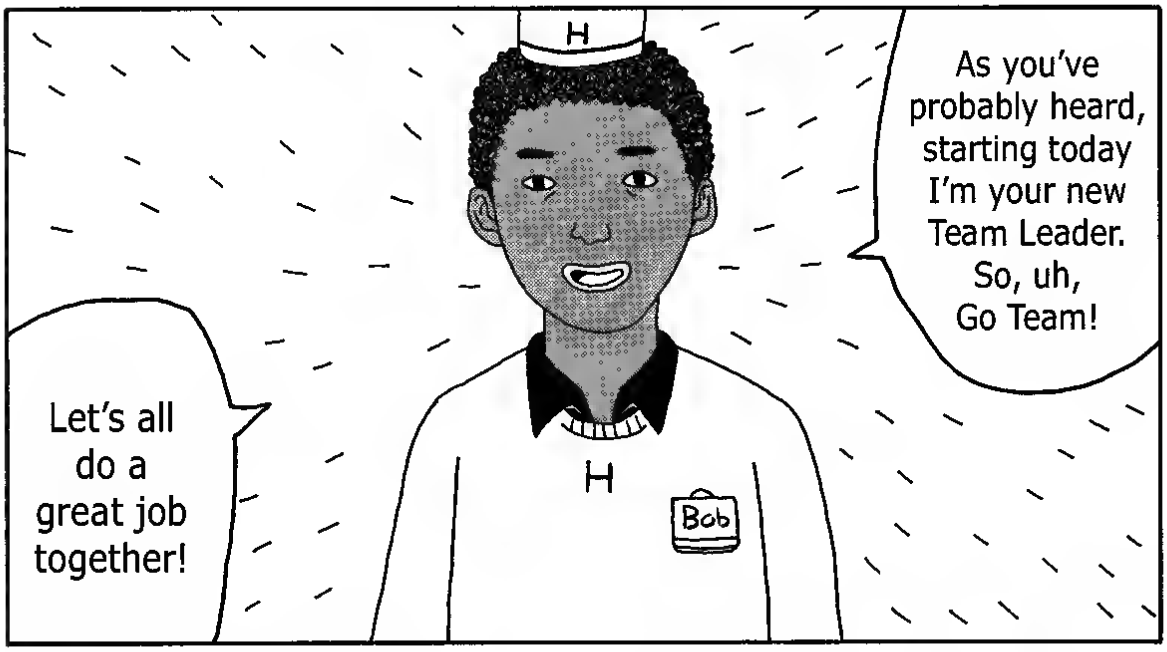

...
"I believe"
!
bwoff
bwoff

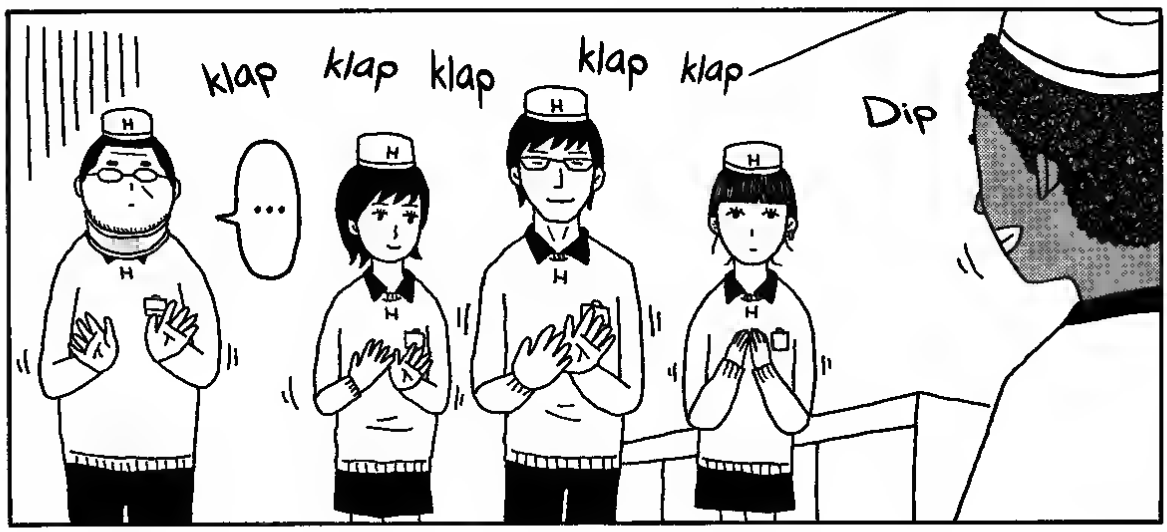

THAT IS WHAT I BELIEVE.
...


UNAMI-SAN...
YES?
THE PASSION IS BACK!
I THINK I CAN DO IT!
A masterpiece!
CHU
GAKU
KAN
...BEST WISHES.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
YOU GOT IT!


Burgers
H
Sorry, We're Closed
H-Burgers
Good morning, everybody!


H-Burgers
Burgers
H
Burgers
H
Now Hiring

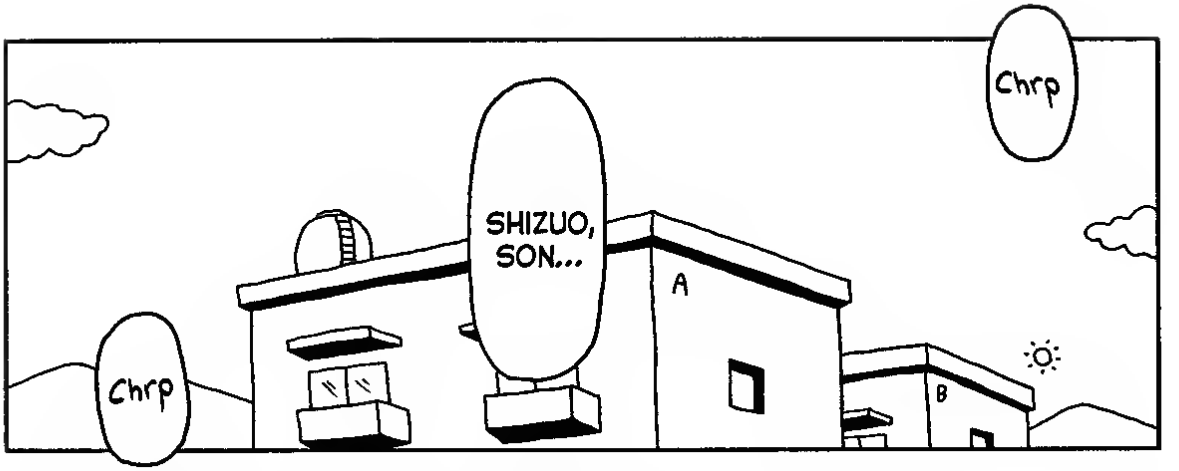

H
H
Bob
As you've probably heard, starting today I'm your new Team Leader. So, uh, Go Team!
Let's all do a great job together!

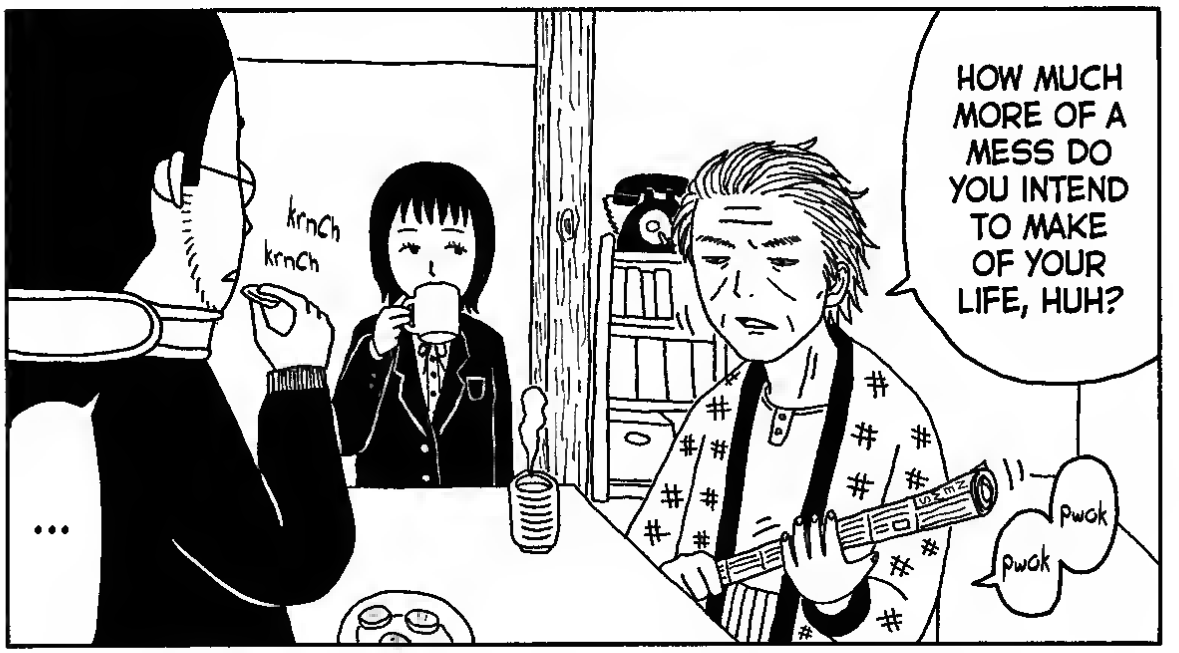

klap
klap
klap
klap
klap
Dip
...

I'M STILL YOUR SUB-LEADER, AS YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD...
dip
No raise in my hourly wage, either...
LET'S ALL DO A GREAT JOB...
Okay, then! It's time to open!
bip
Let's work hard and make this another good day!
Bob
klap
klap
klap
klap
What's with...
...this weird sense of defeat?
YES-SIR...
Manager*, (*Nick-name) let's have you in charge of drinks today!

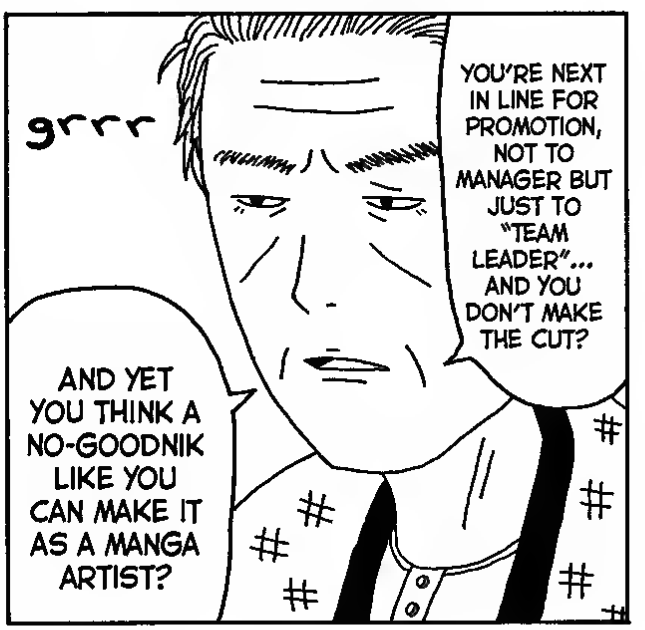
...QUITTING?
H
Tanaka
YEAH, AT THE END OF THIS WEEK.
I'm outta here.
No.
uh-huh
rattle rattle
COME ON... YOU'RE DYING TO ASK, AREN'T YOU?
...
AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME WHY?
We go back a long ways...
wobble wobble
UH-HUH.
"UH-HUH"? THAT'S IT?
TOILET
Highballs
Welcome!
BAR MVP
MVP
...WELL, A FRIEND OF MINE'S OPENING A BAR, SEE.
...
HE ASKED ME TO COME WORK THERE AS THE MANAGER.
IT WAS ABOUT TIME I SETTLED ON A CAREER, ANYWAY.
I'm already 26
WELL, LUCKY YOU, HAVING THIS CONVENIENT FRIEND...

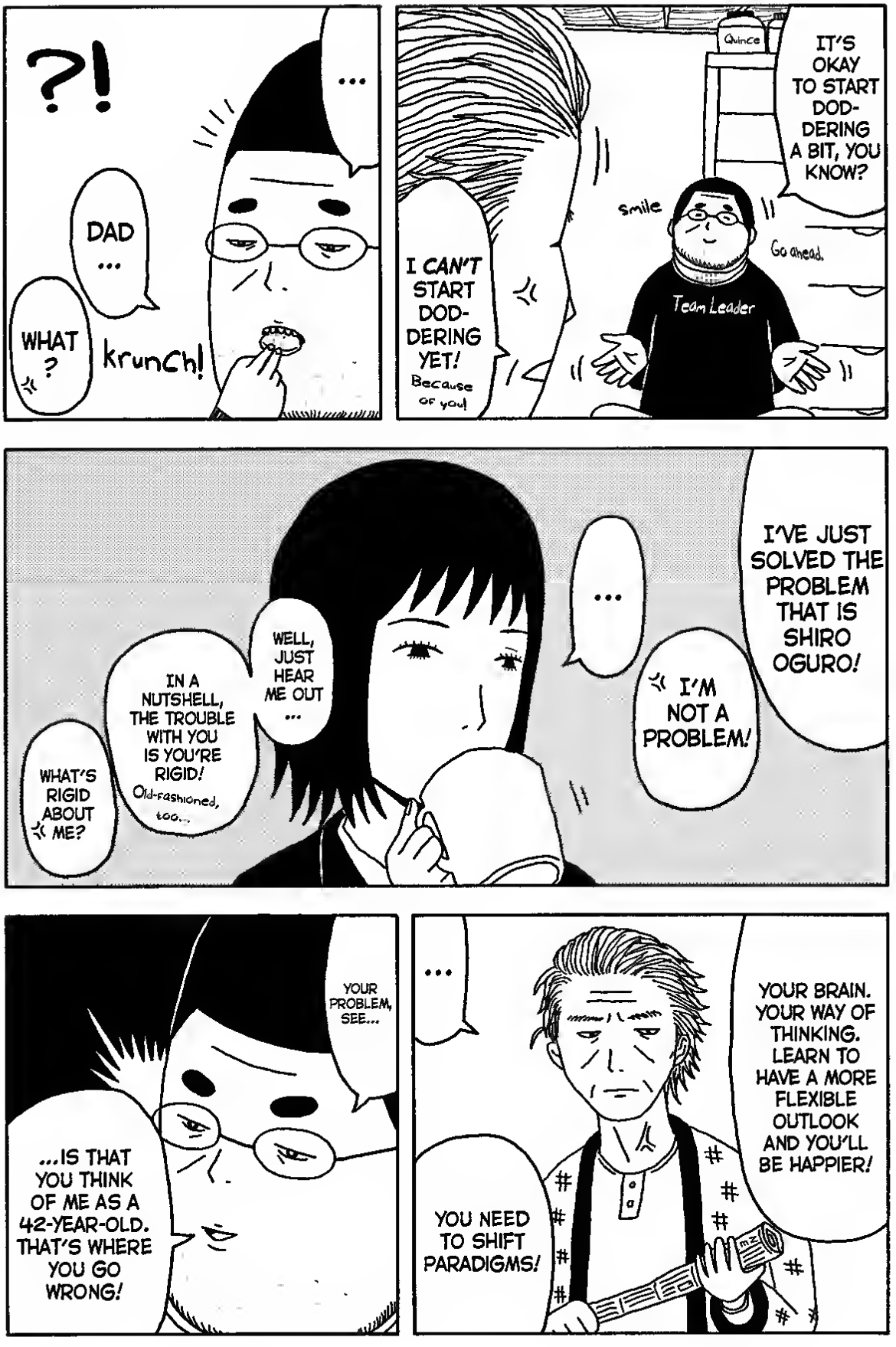
Team Leader, hmm...
hffff
So now you'll get promoted to Team Leader like you always wanted, Manager*! (*Nickname)
You're next in line.
hmph
klik
It's not what I've always wanted, you dope ...
Changing Room
What ?
So where's it gonna be?
Good
Bye
!
Ta
na
ka
I'm assuming you'll be in charge of organizing it. Right, Manager*? (*Nickname)
My farewell party, of course!
My big send-off!
Good-bye. Forever...
...
tump
What ...? It doesn't...?
The world doesn't revolve around you, okay? Remember that.
pop
Tanaka, dude ...
Yeah ?
twirl

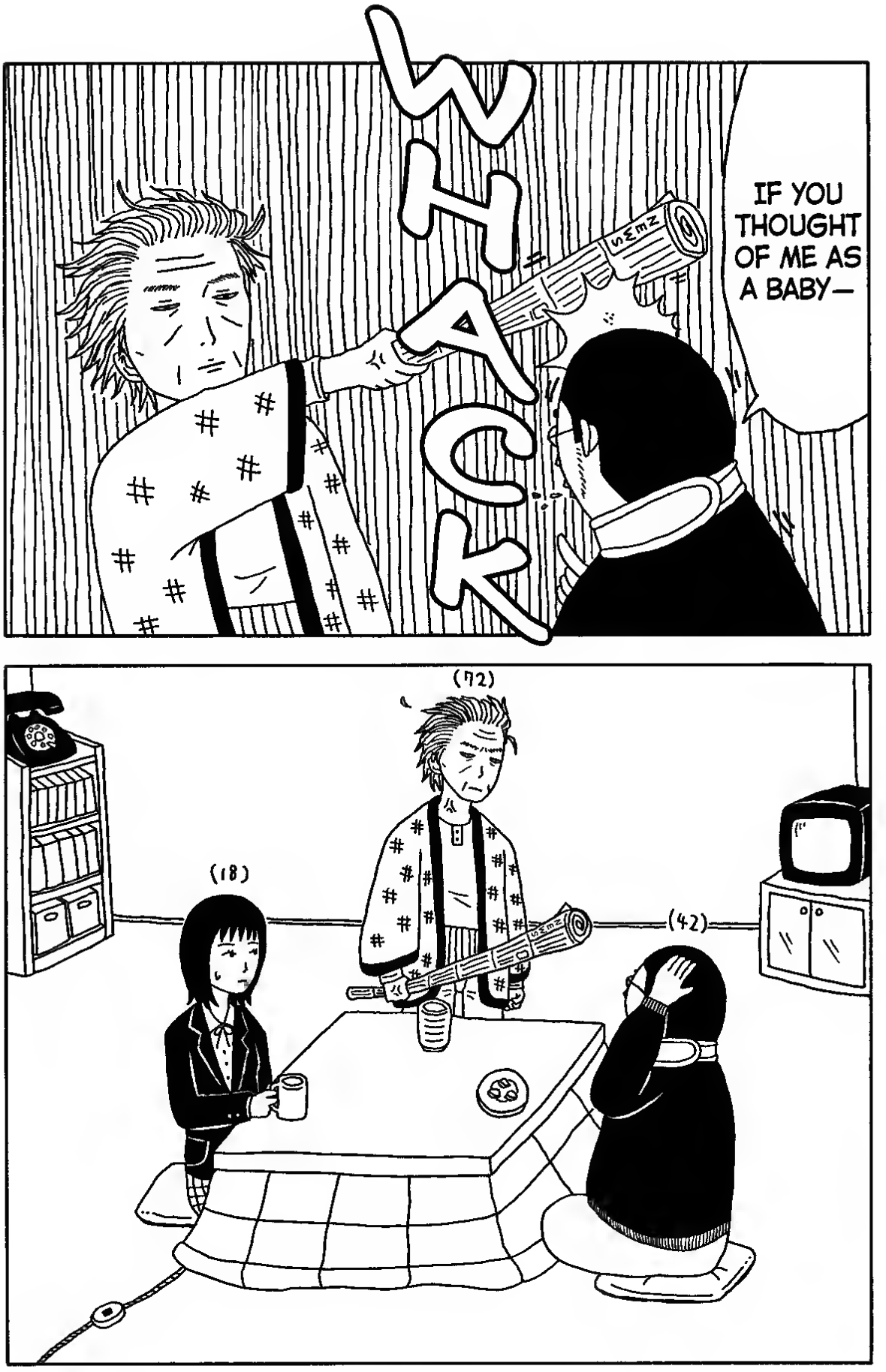

Chrp
SHIZUO, SON...
A
B
Chrp


HOW MUCH MORE OF A MESS DO YOU INTEND TO MAKE OF YOUR LIFE, HUH?
krnCh krnCh
...
pwok
pwok

QUIET, SHIRO-SAN. IT'S TOO EARLY IN THE MORNING, OKAY?
Too much energy..
SShhh
ARE YOU REALLY A SENIOR CITIZEN?
What do you eat?


grrr
YOU'RE NEXT IN LINE FOR PROMOTION, NOT TO MANAGER BUT JUST TO "TEAM LEADER"... AND YOU DON'T MAKE THE CUT?
AND YET YOU THINK A NO-GOODNIK LIKE YOU CAN MAKE IT AS A MANGA ARTIST?

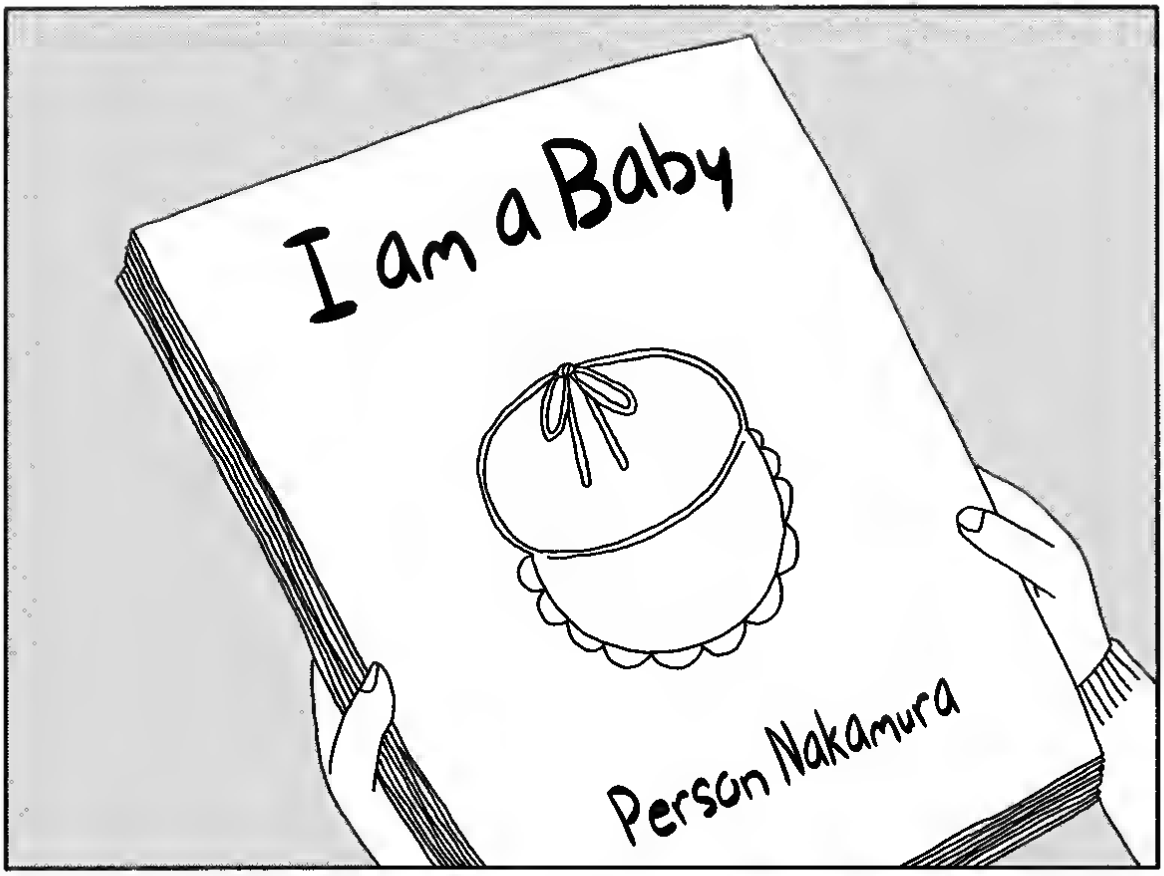

?!
...
DAD
...
WHAT
?
krunch!
Quince
IT'S OKAY TO START DOD-DERING A BIT, YOU KNOW?
smile
Go ahead.
Team Leader
I CAN'T START DOD-DERING YET!
Because of you!
I'VE JUST SOLVED THE PROBLEM THAT IS SHIRO OGURO!
...
I'M NOT A PROBLEM!
WELL, JUST HEAR ME OUT ...
IN A NUTSHELL, THE TROUBLE WITH YOU IS YOU'RE RIGID!
Old-fashioned, too...
WHAT'S RIGID ABOUT ME?
YOUR PROBLEM, SEE...
...IS THAT YOU THINK OF ME AS A 42-YEAR-OLD. THAT'S WHERE YOU GO WRONG!
...
YOUR BRAIN. YOUR WAY OF THINKING. LEARN TO HAVE A MORE FLEXIBLE OUTLOOK AND YOU'LL BE HAPPIER!
YOU NEED TO SHIFT PARADIGMS!

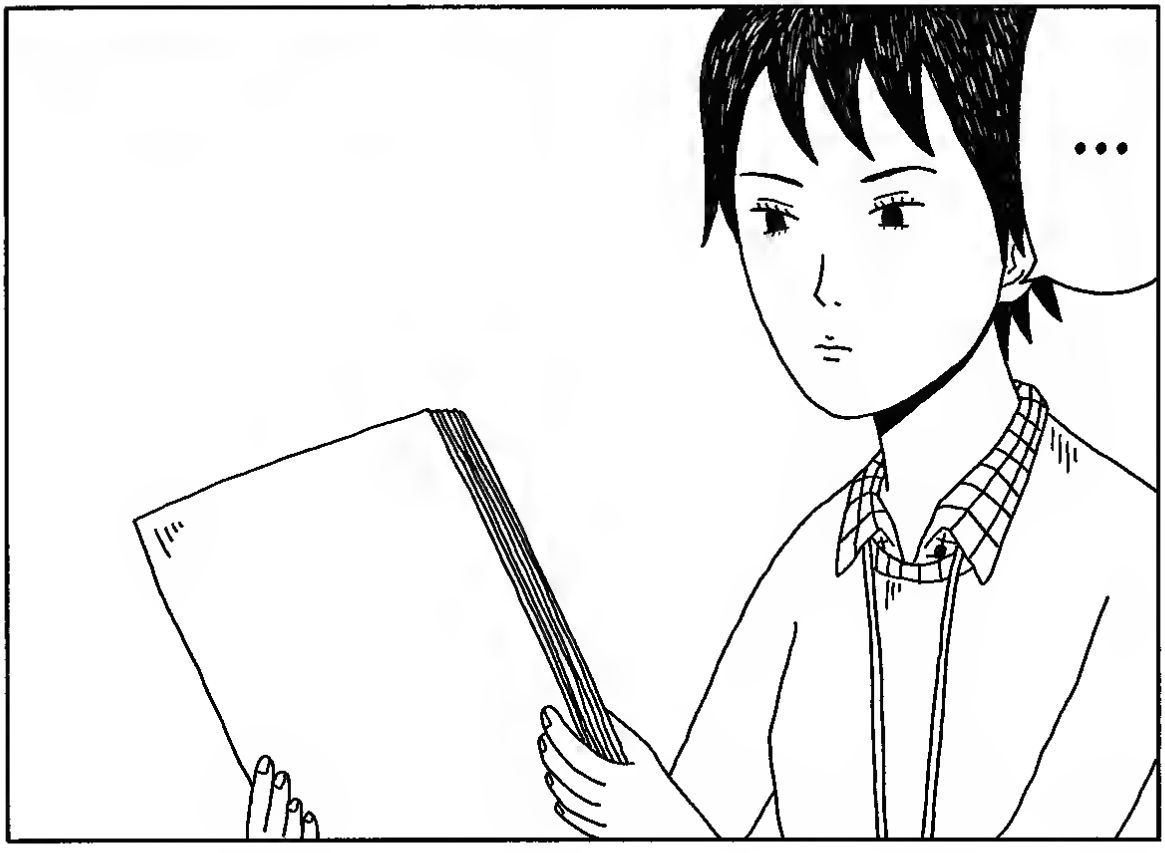

WHACK
IF YOU THOUGHT OF ME AS A BABY—
(72)
(18)
(42)

YOU ...!
"JUST THINK OF ME AS A BABY"?!
GYAAAH!
KIACK
Quince
Team Leader
...
AREN'T YOU ASHAMED OF YOURSELF, SAYING THAT IN FRONT OF YOUR DAUGHTER?
As a father?
...
AND IN THE FIRST PLACE... WHAT *REAL* BABY STARTS THE DAY WITH A GLASS OF RED WINE, HUH?!
...

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, RED WINE IS FULL OF THESE THINGS CALLED POLYPHENOLS WHICH ARE REALLY GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH, OKAY? THEY THIN YOUR BLOOD...
krnCh
krnCh
Swirl
Swirl
...WHICH IN TURN GETS THE BRAIN GOING, SEE? THE SYNAPSES START POPPING! THE RESULT— BETTER MANGA.
Probably.
SO ANYWAY, THAT'S THE WAY IT IS.
Want a glass, daddy-o?
WHAT'S THE WAY WHAT IS?!
brrrp
...
tipple
gulp
gulp
WHACK
WELL, IF YOU'D JUST WATCH ME GROW UP WITH LOVE AND ENCOUR-AGEM—

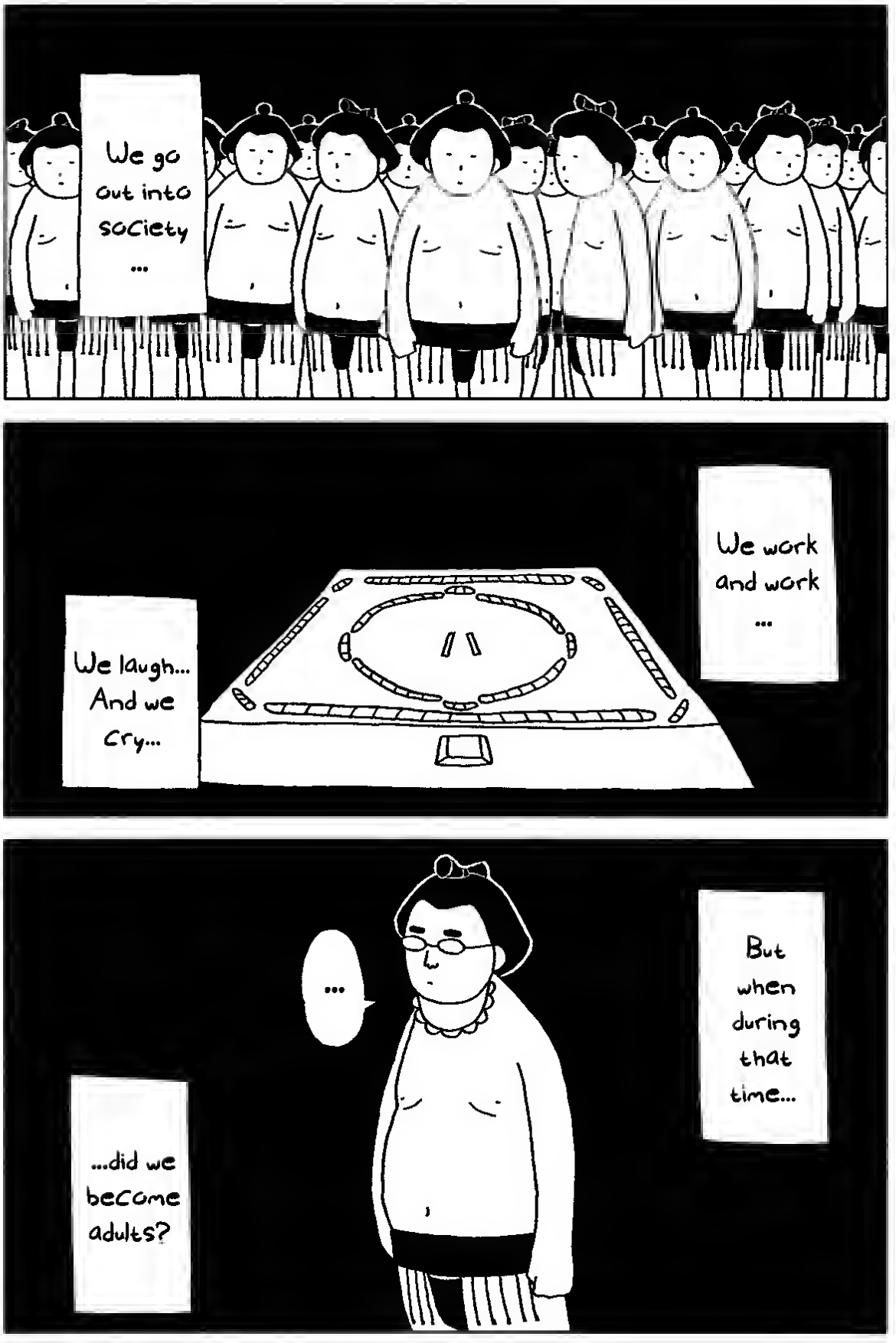
WHACK
YOU SEE THIS, SUZUKO ?!
YOU'RE A WITNESS TO CHILD ABUSE!
Help!
WHACK
GYAAAH!
WHAT'S WITH THAT WAILING ?!
I'M GOING! BYE!
KAICHAK
BYE! HAVE A GOOD DAY!
Take care!
Quince
Swirl
Swirl
Team Leader
WHACK
WHACK
GYAAH!
YOU IDIOT SON OF MINE, WAKE UP TO THE REAL WORLD!

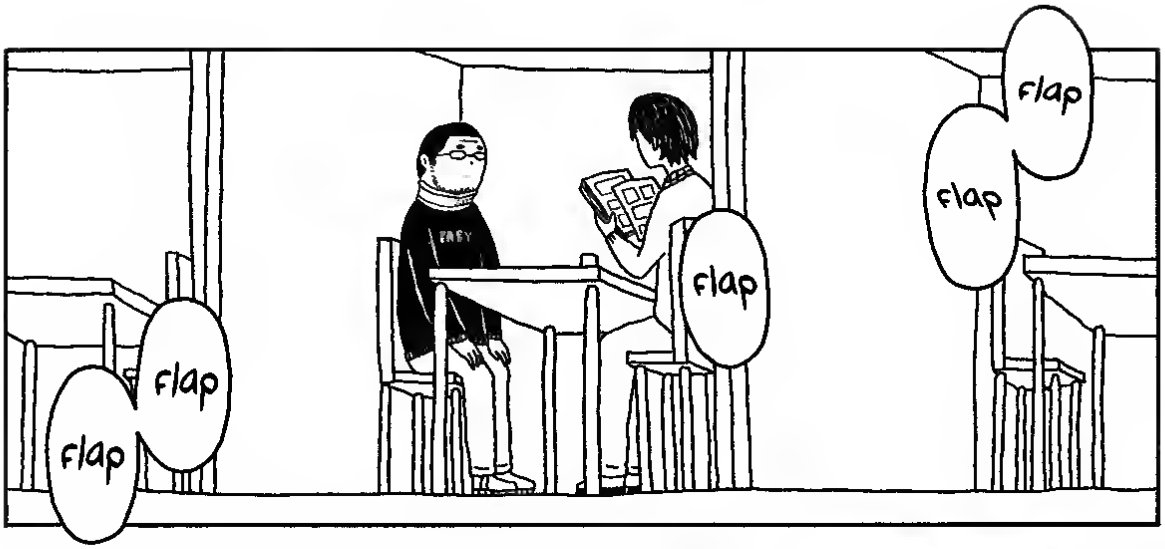

I am a Baby
Person Nakamura


...

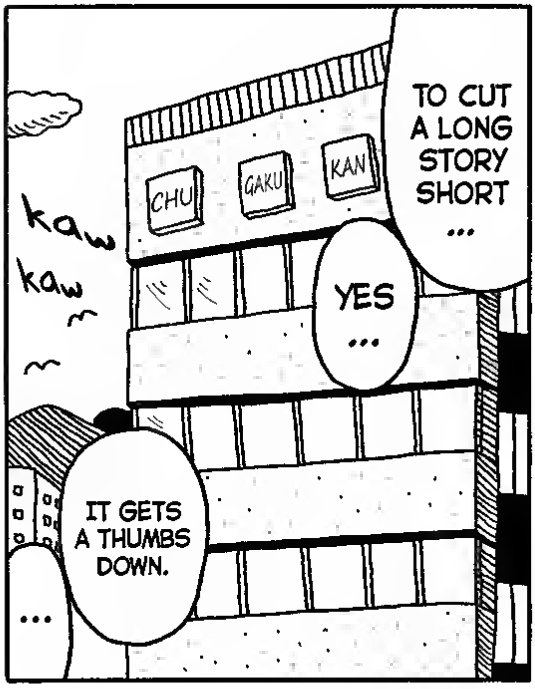
...ARE YOU JERKING ME AROUND?
...
...MY APOLOGIES.
dip
THAT'S FINE...
I'M TOTALLY SERIOUS...
flash
WELL, THEN... I'LL GET STARTED, IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
flap
PLEASE DO.

What does it mean to be an adult?
What does work mean?
We're born ...
What do titles mean?
We grow up ...

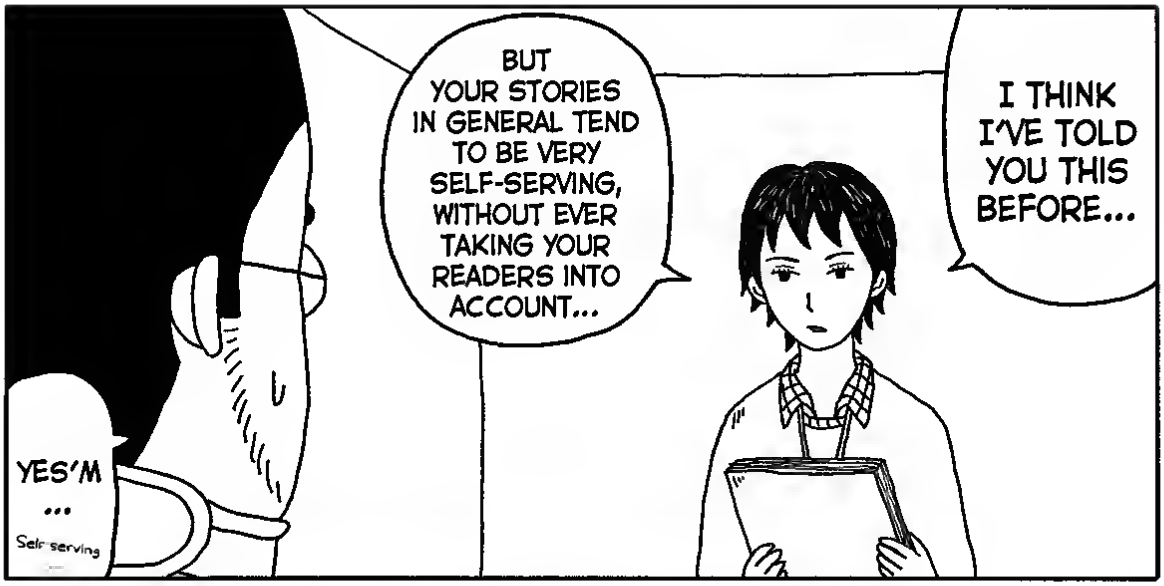

We go out into society ...
We work and work ...
We laugh... And we cry...
But when during that time...
...
...did we become adults?

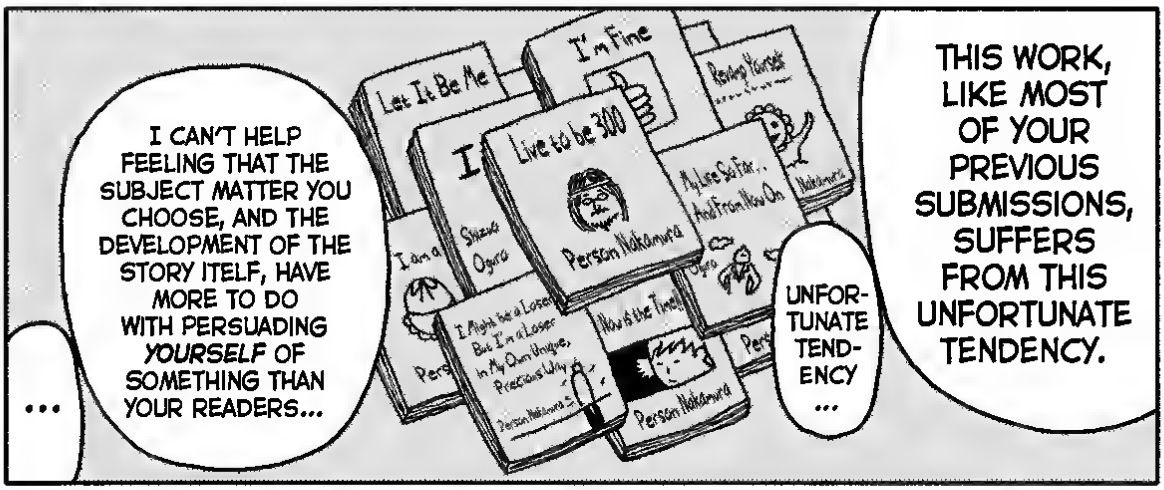

flap
flap
flap
flap
flap

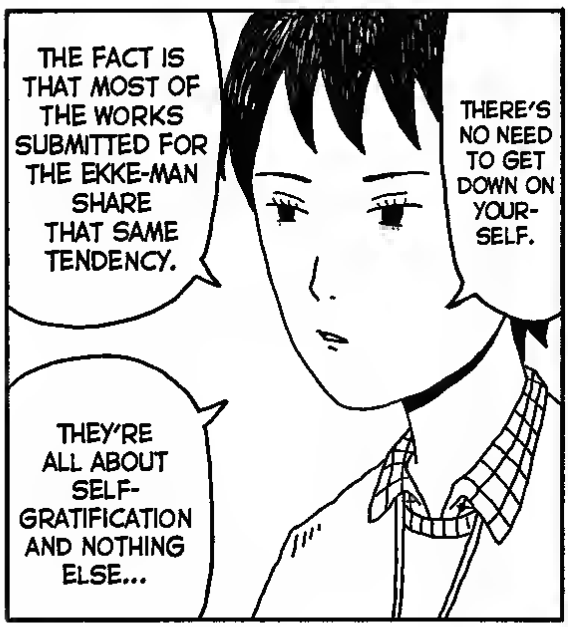
...
flap


CHU
GAKU
KAN
kaw
kaw
TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT ...
YES ...
IT GETS A THUMBS DOWN.
...

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING ...
BABY
I am a Baby
NOT AT ALL ...

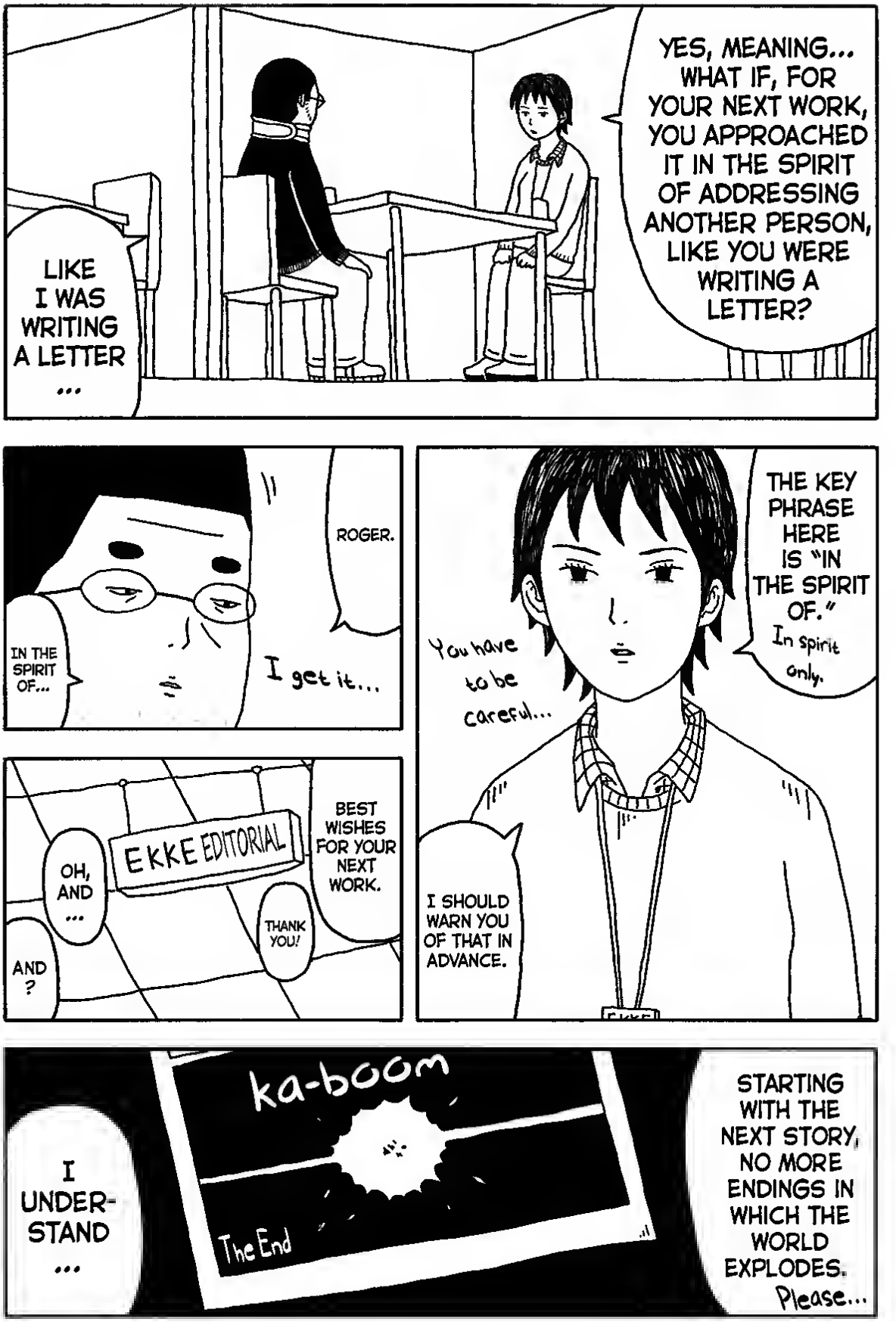

BUT YOUR STORIES IN GENERAL TEND TO BE VERY SELF-SERVING, WITHOUT EVER TAKING YOUR READERS INTO ACCOUNT...
I THINK I'VE TOLD YOU THIS BEFORE...
YES'M ... Self-serving

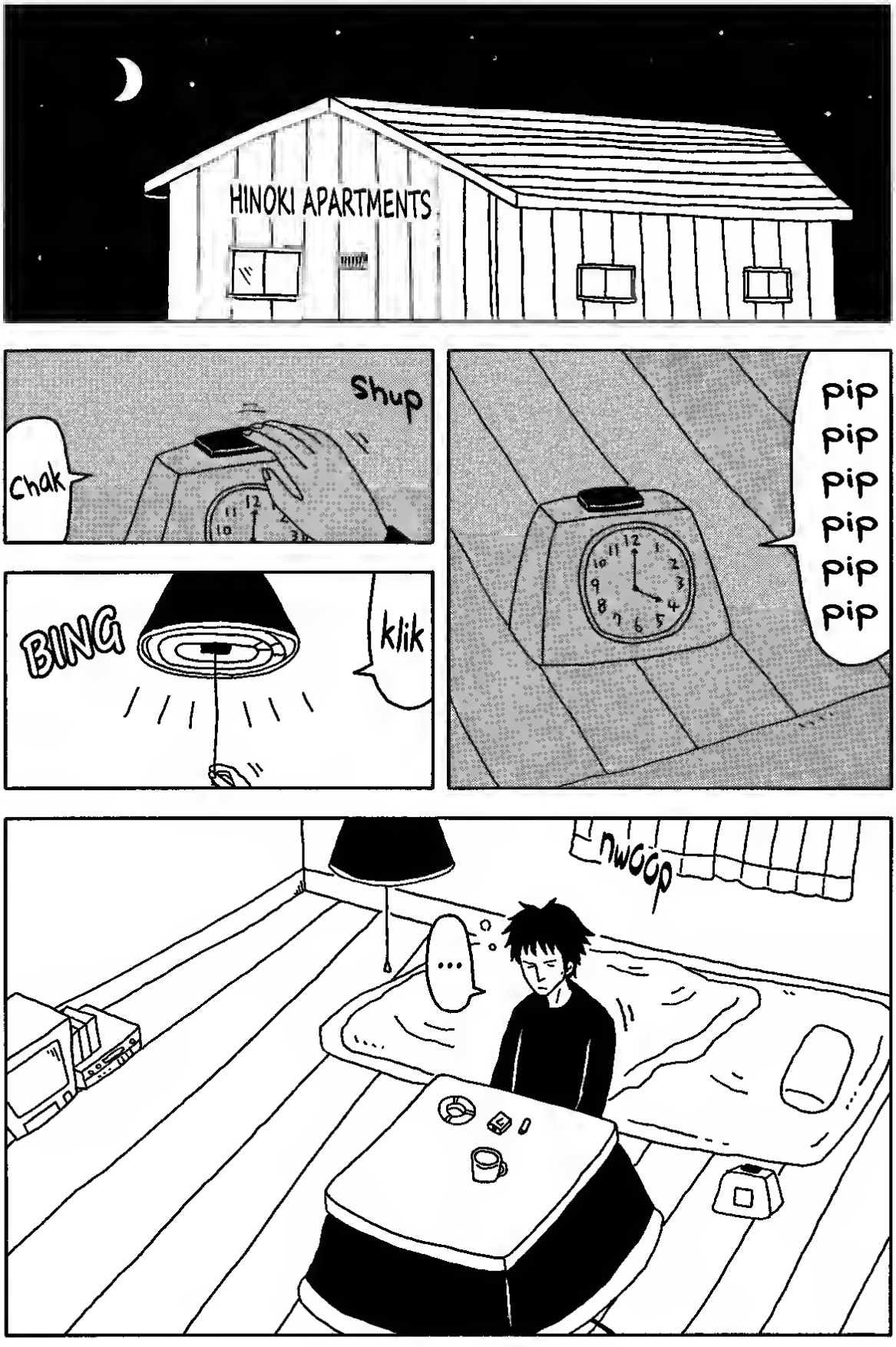

I CAN'T HELP FEELING THAT THE SUBJECT MATTER YOU CHOOSE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORY ITELF, HAVE MORE TO DO WITH PERSUADING *YOURSELF* OF SOMETHING THAN YOUR READERS...
...
Let It Be Me
I'm Fine
Live to be 300
Person Nakamura
UNFOR-TUNATE TEND-ENCY ...
THIS WORK, LIKE MOST OF YOUR PREVIOUS SUBMISSIONS, SUFFERS FROM THIS UNFORTUNATE TENDENCY.


THE FACT IS THAT MOST OF THE WORKS SUBMITTED FOR THE EKKE-MAN SHARE THAT SAME TENDENCY.
THERE'S NO NEED TO GET DOWN ON YOUR-SELF.
THEY'RE ALL ABOUT SELF-GRATIFICATION AND NOTHING ELSE...

Now that it's out there...
BULL'S-EYE...
BABY
I THINK YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT ...

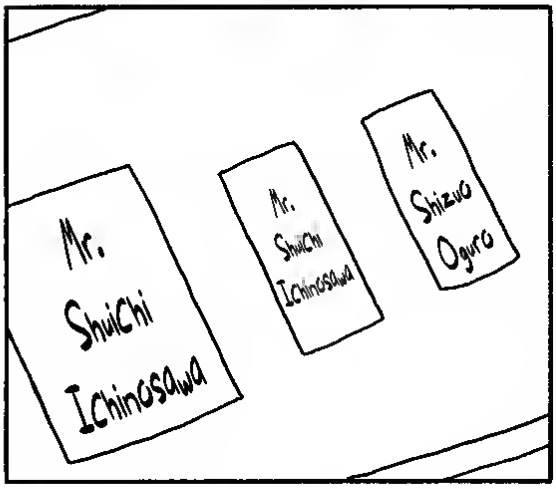
...HAVE YOU EVER WRITTEN A LETTER TO ANYONE, OGURO-SAN?
BABY
A LETTER ?
YES ... I have...
Waaaah
...
Miss Eriko Osaki
BASICALLY, WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS... MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY A CHANGE OF APPROACH.
I am a Baby
Person Maternal
A CHANGE OF APPROACH ...


LIKE I WAS WRITING A LETTER ...
YES, MEANING... WHAT IF, FOR YOUR NEXT WORK, YOU APPROACHED IT IN THE SPIRIT OF ADDRESSING ANOTHER PERSON, LIKE YOU WERE WRITING A LETTER?
IN THE SPIRIT OF...
ROGER.
I get it...
You have to be careful...
THE KEY PHRASE HERE IS "IN THE SPIRIT OF."
In spirit only.
I SHOULD WARN YOU OF THAT IN ADVANCE.
EKKE EDITORIAL
OH, AND ...
AND ?
THANK YOU!
BEST WISHES FOR YOUR NEXT WORK.
I UNDER-STAND ...
ka-boom
The End
STARTING WITH THE NEXT STORY, NO MORE ENDINGS IN WHICH THE WORLD EXPLODES.
Please...


HINOKI APARTMENTS
Chak
Shup
pip
pip
pip
pip
pip
pip
BING
klik
nwoop
...

tok
tok
...
...
Bakery
Mi Yata
CY
Shopping Street
Shopping Street
...
kchik
...
grope
grope
?
Bakery
Mi Yata
kchik
tinkle
tinkle
Bakery

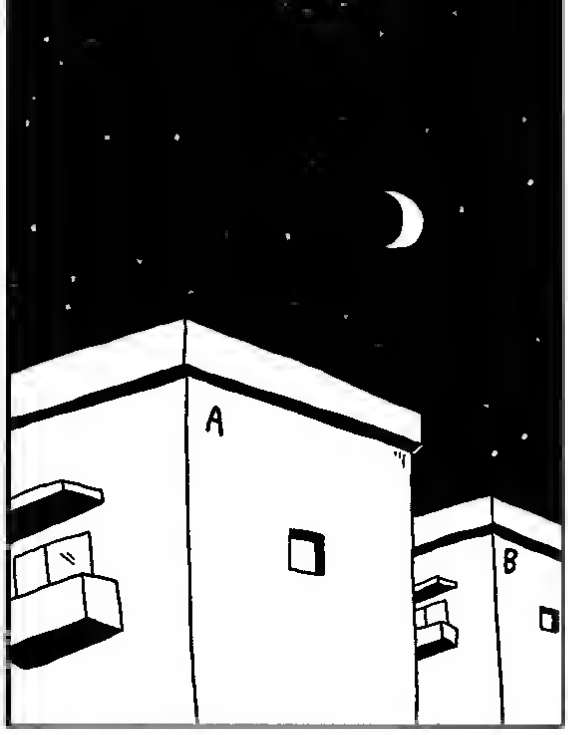
GOOD MORNING ...
glance
glance
... OSAMU -SAN?

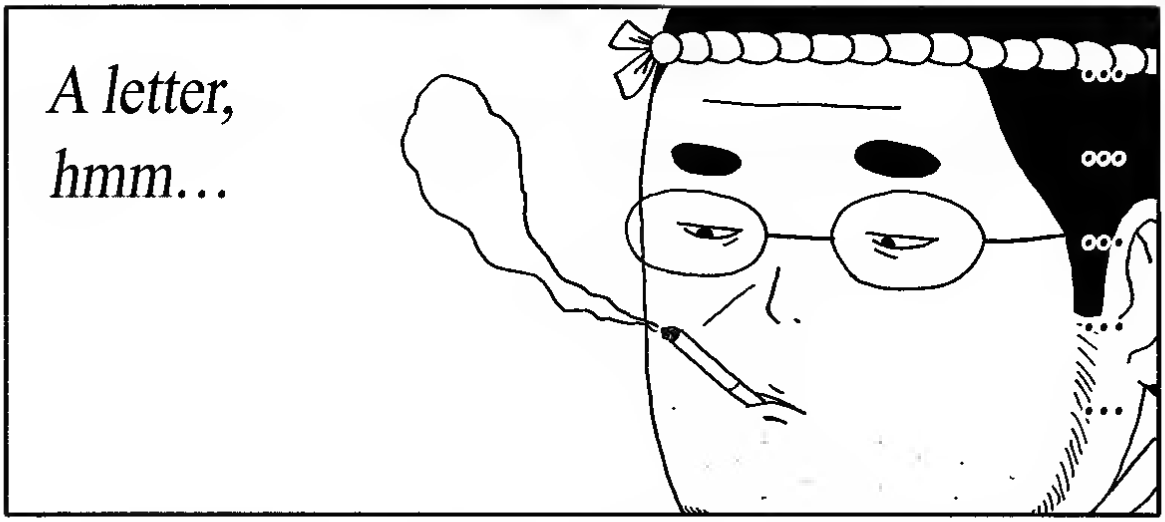

Mr. ShuiChi Ichinosawa
Mr. ShuiChi Ichinosawa
Mr. Shizuo Ogura

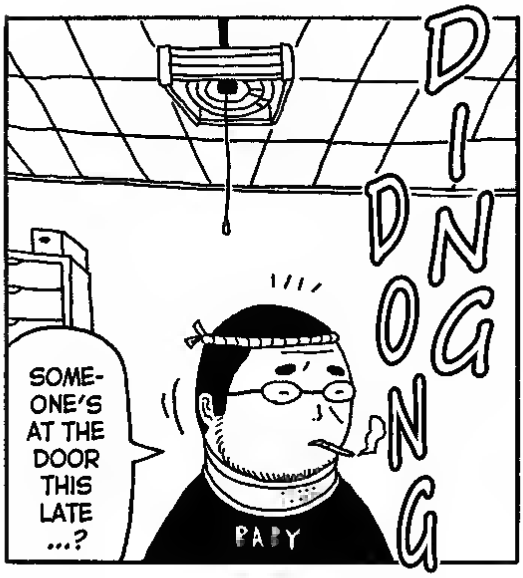
...
...
Mr. ShuiChi Ichinosawa
rustle

...
...

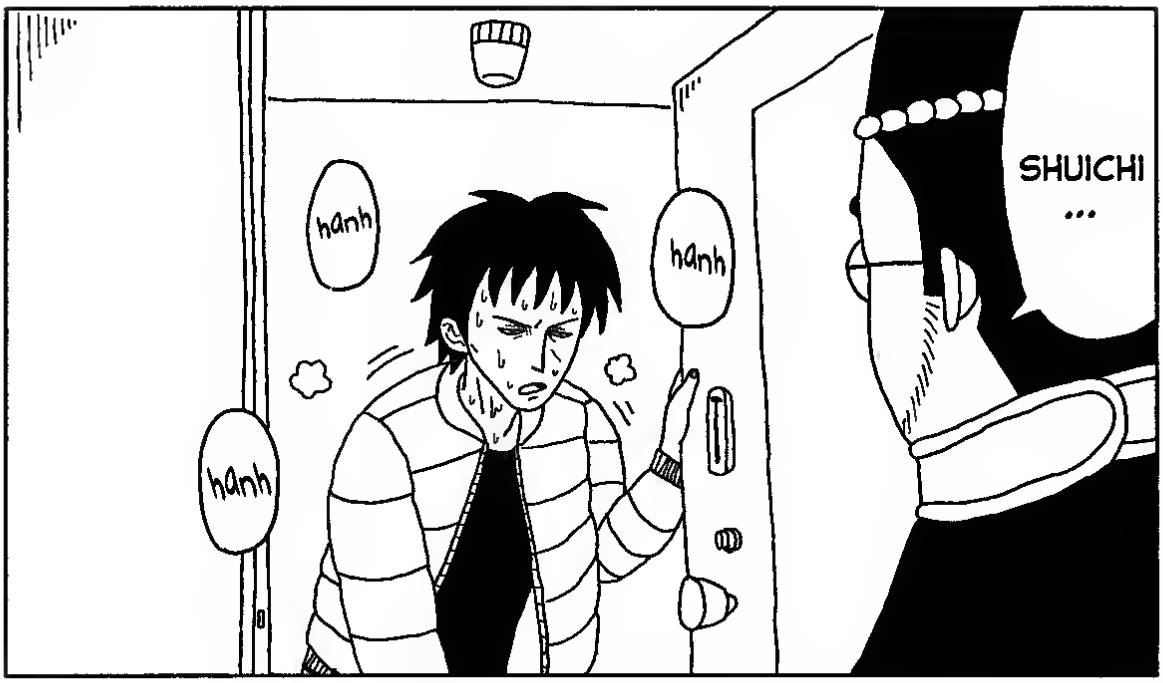
Get Published
...

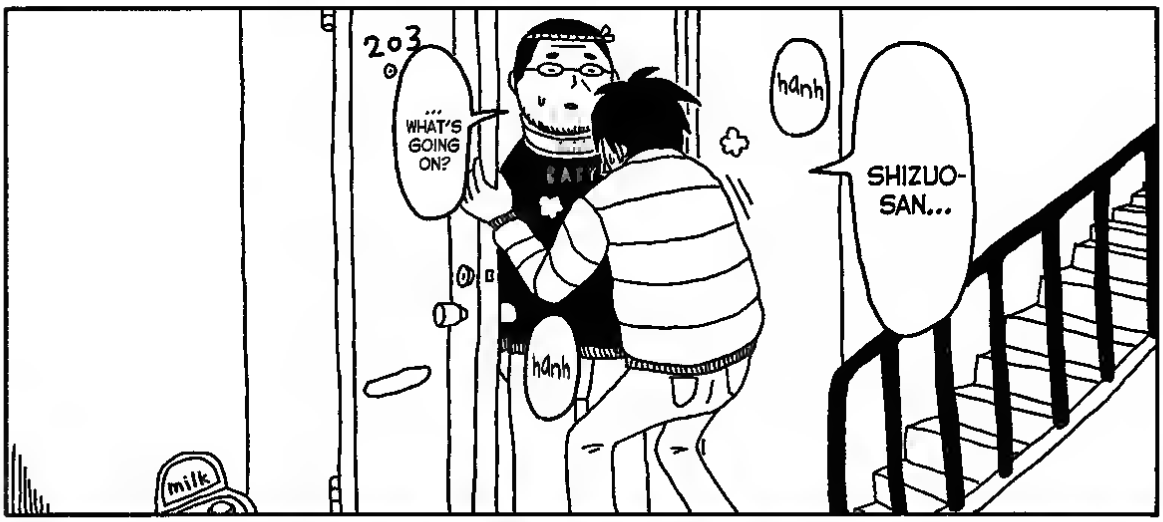

A
B

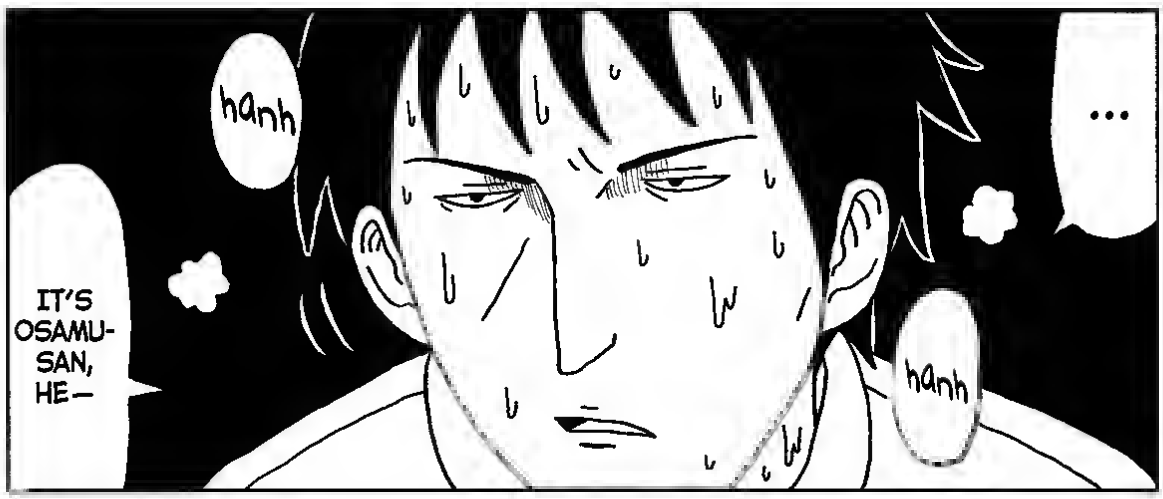

A letter, hmm...


DING DONG
SOME-ONE'S AT THE DOOR THIS LATE ...?
BABY

IN THE SPIRIT OF... WRITING A LETTER ...
OOPS, NO NO NO... NOT AN ACTUAL LETTER ...
BABY


hanh
hanh
hanh
SHUICHI
...


203
...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
hanh
hanh
SHIZUO-SAN...
milk


hanh
IT'S OSAMU-SAN, HE—
...
hanh

Chapter 24:
Letter

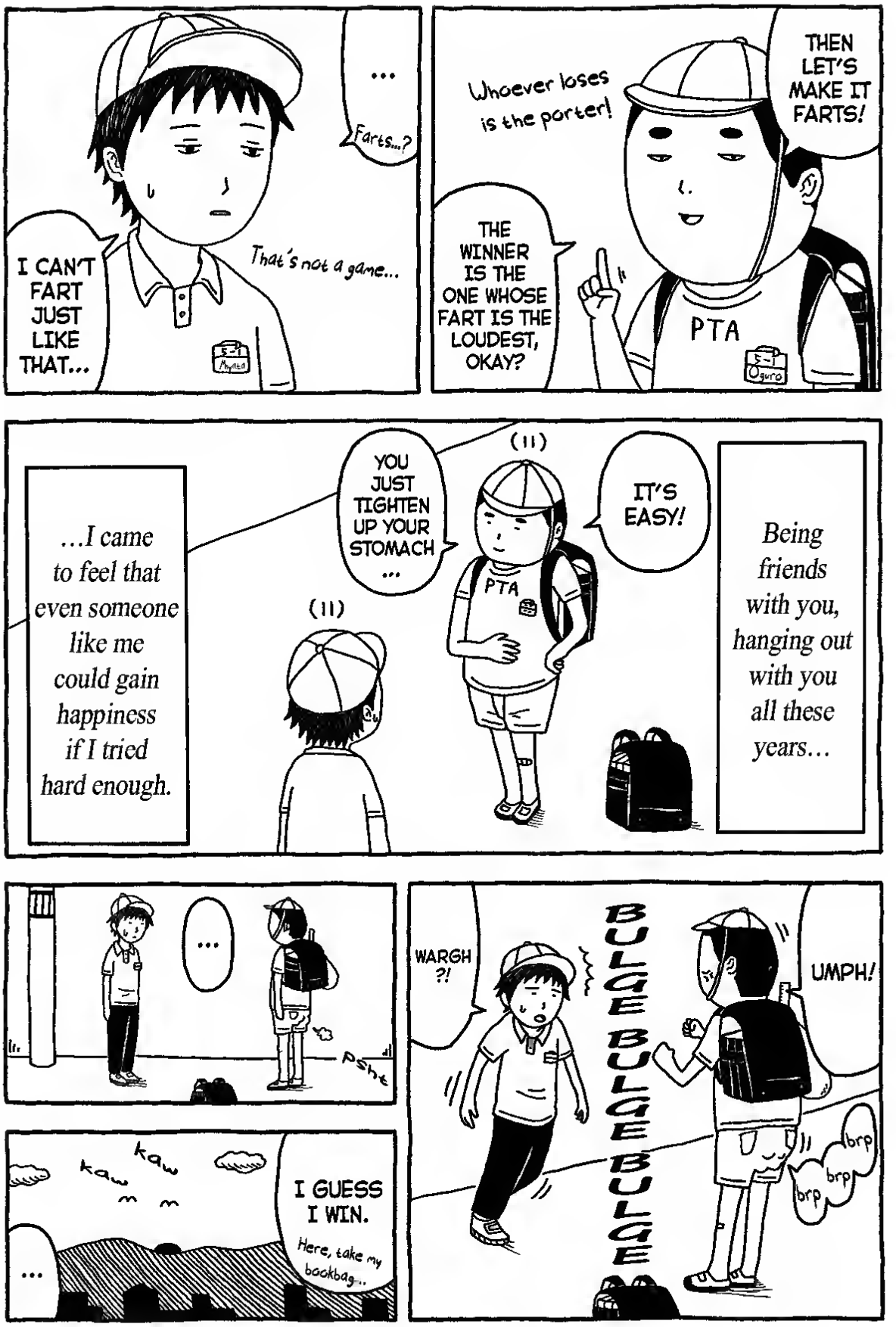
Dear Shizuo,
Sorry for up and disappearing like this.
Dear Shizuo,
Sorry for up and disappearing like this.
I just suddenly got really tired of everything.
There is nothing left for me anymore.
...
...
I just suddenly got really tired of everything.
BABY
There is nothing left for me anymore.

...
slump
...
I never had anything to begin with.
Or, actually, there never was in the first place.

MASAO WENT TO AMERICA ...?
YEAH ...
OSAMU-SAN MADE ME SWEAR NOT TO TELL YOU ...
HE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ...
UH-HUH ...
BUT I SHOULD'VE TOLD YOU ANYWAY ...
I'M SORRY ...
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE, SHUICHI ...
YOU DID NOTHING WRONG.
nwoop

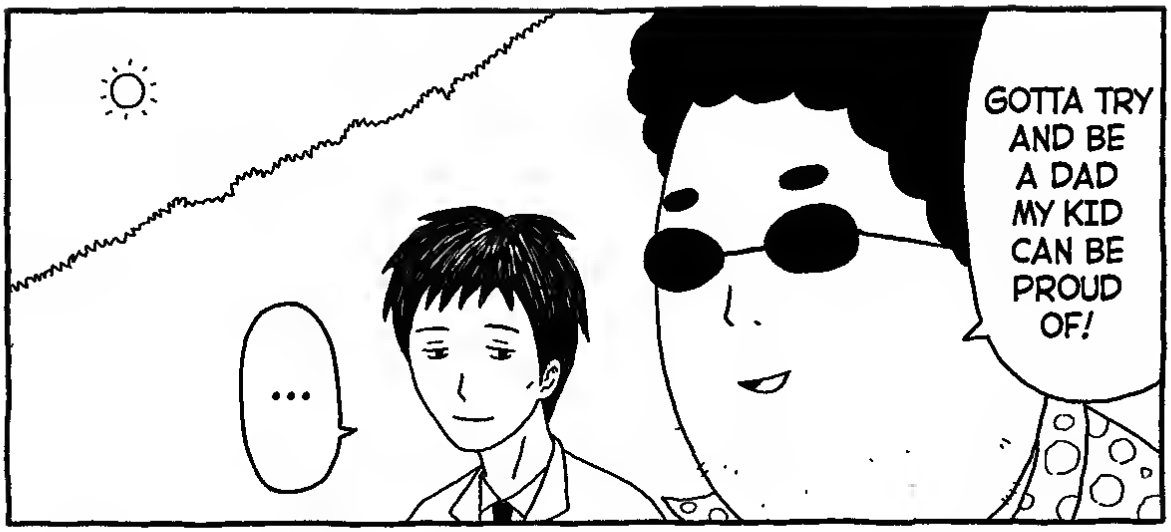
...HAD ALL THE PAPERS AND ACCOUNTS AND STUFF FOR THE BAKERY IN IT...
PLUS...A PASSBOOK AND SEAL ...
...WHAT WAS IN THAT BIG ENVELOPE HE LEFT YOU?
Mr. Shuichi Ichinosawa
Mr. Shuichi Ichinosawa
THAT ONE ...
IN HIS LETTER, HE SAID HE WANTED ME TO USE THEM IN MY LIFE FROM NOW ON...
AS Ordinary Account Passbook
SHUICHI ICHINOSAWA
AS BANK
HE'D OPENED AN ACCOUNT IN MY NAME, AND MADE A SEAL FOR ME TOO...
MIYATA ...
BABY
...

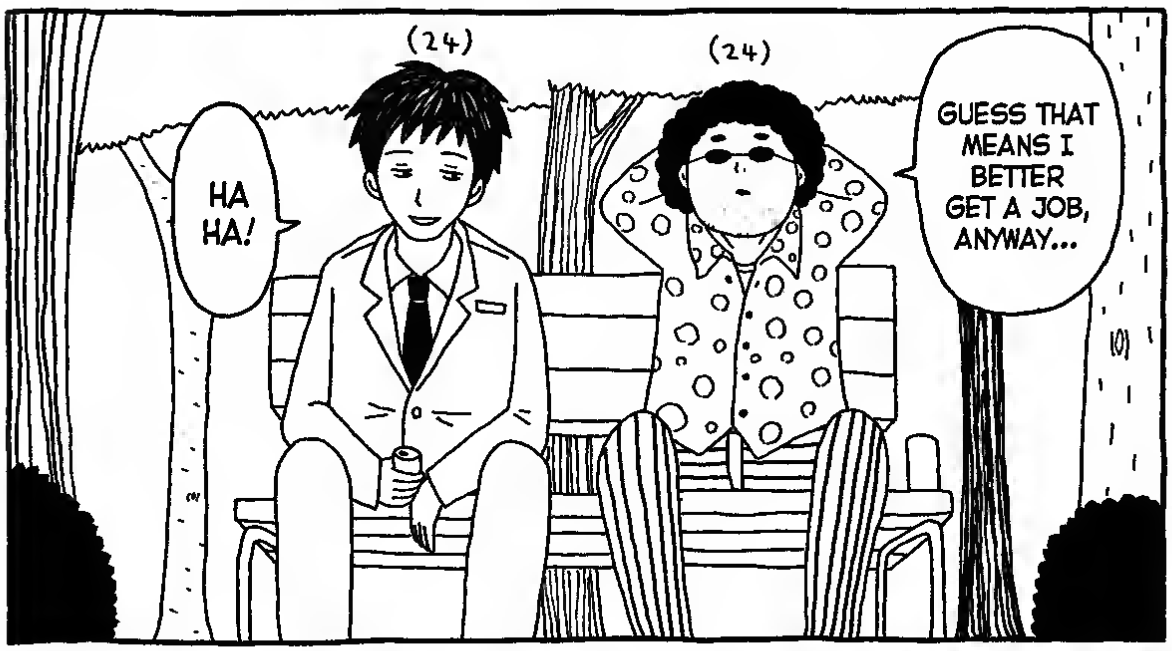
MIYA-CHAN!
LET'S QUIT PLAYING ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS!
OKAY, SO HOW'LL WE DECIDE WHO'S THE PORTER, THEN?
Why don't you pick, Shizuo?
I'M OKAY WITH ANY-THING.
Shizuo...
HOW COME?
YOU'RE TOO GOOD AT IT.
I lost five times in a row.
And your backpack is super-heavy...
PTA


I CAN'T FART JUST LIKE THAT...
That's not a game...
...
Farts...?
Whoever loses is the porter!
THEN LET'S MAKE IT FARTS!
THE WINNER IS THE ONE WHOSE FART IS THE LOUDEST, OKAY?
PTA
...I came to feel that even someone like me could gain happiness if I tried hard enough.
YOU JUST TIGHTEN UP YOUR STOMACH ...
(11)
IT'S EASY!
PTA
(11)
Being friends with you, hanging out with you all these years...
...
Pshe
kaw
kaw
I GUESS I WIN.
Here, take my backbag...
...
WARGH ?!
BULGE BULGE BULGE
UMPH!
brp
brp
brp

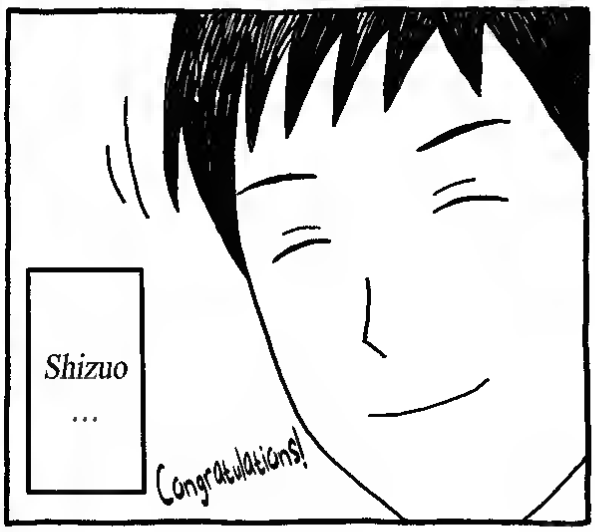
But I
was wrong
about that.

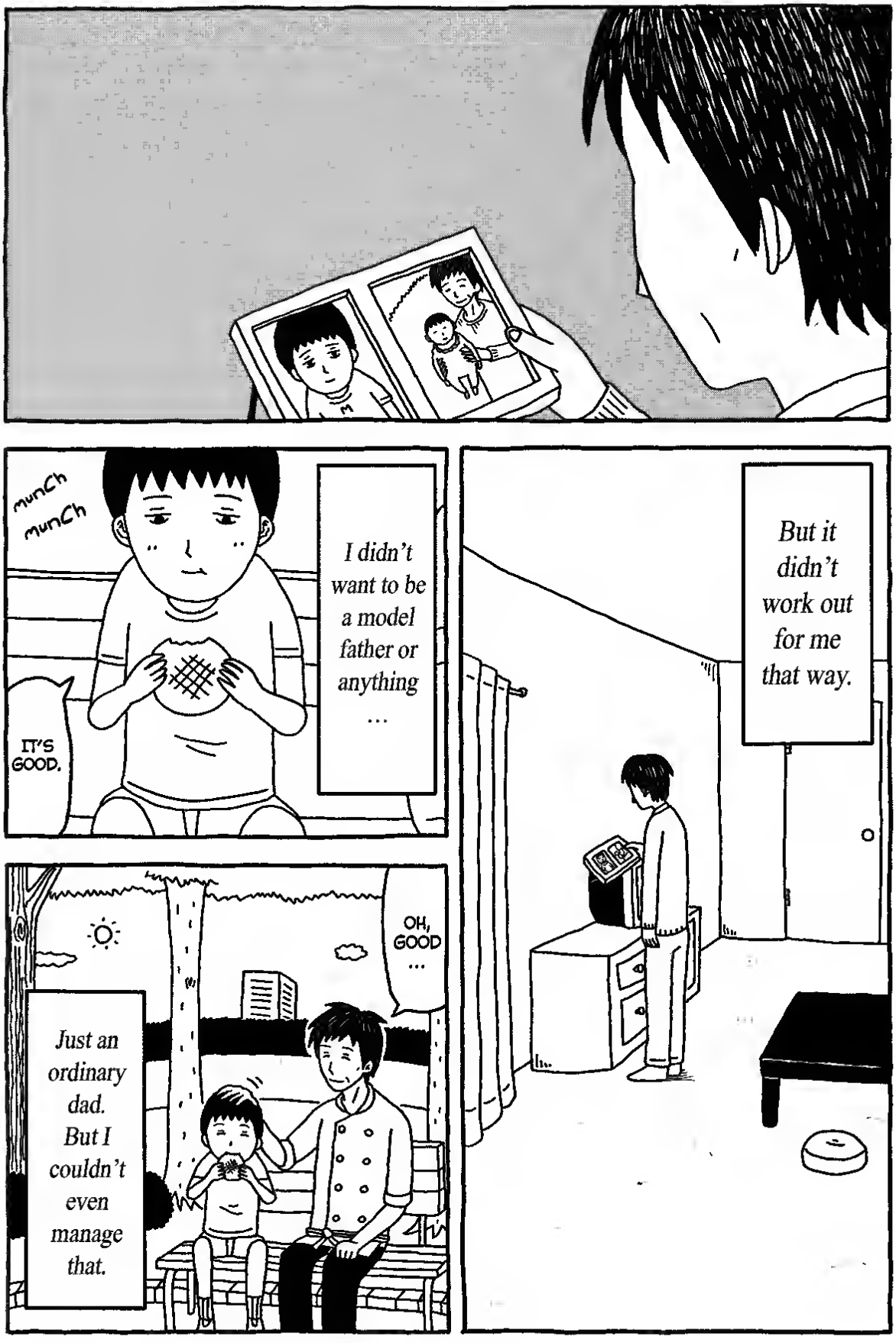
Bakery
Mi Yata
Shopping Street
Bakery
Opening the bakery turned out to be all for nothing, too.
ALL RIGHT ...
...
In the end it was just me, flailing around by myself.
WILL YOU AGREE TO IT?
I'M GOING TO BE A FATHER...
HM?
MIYATA ...

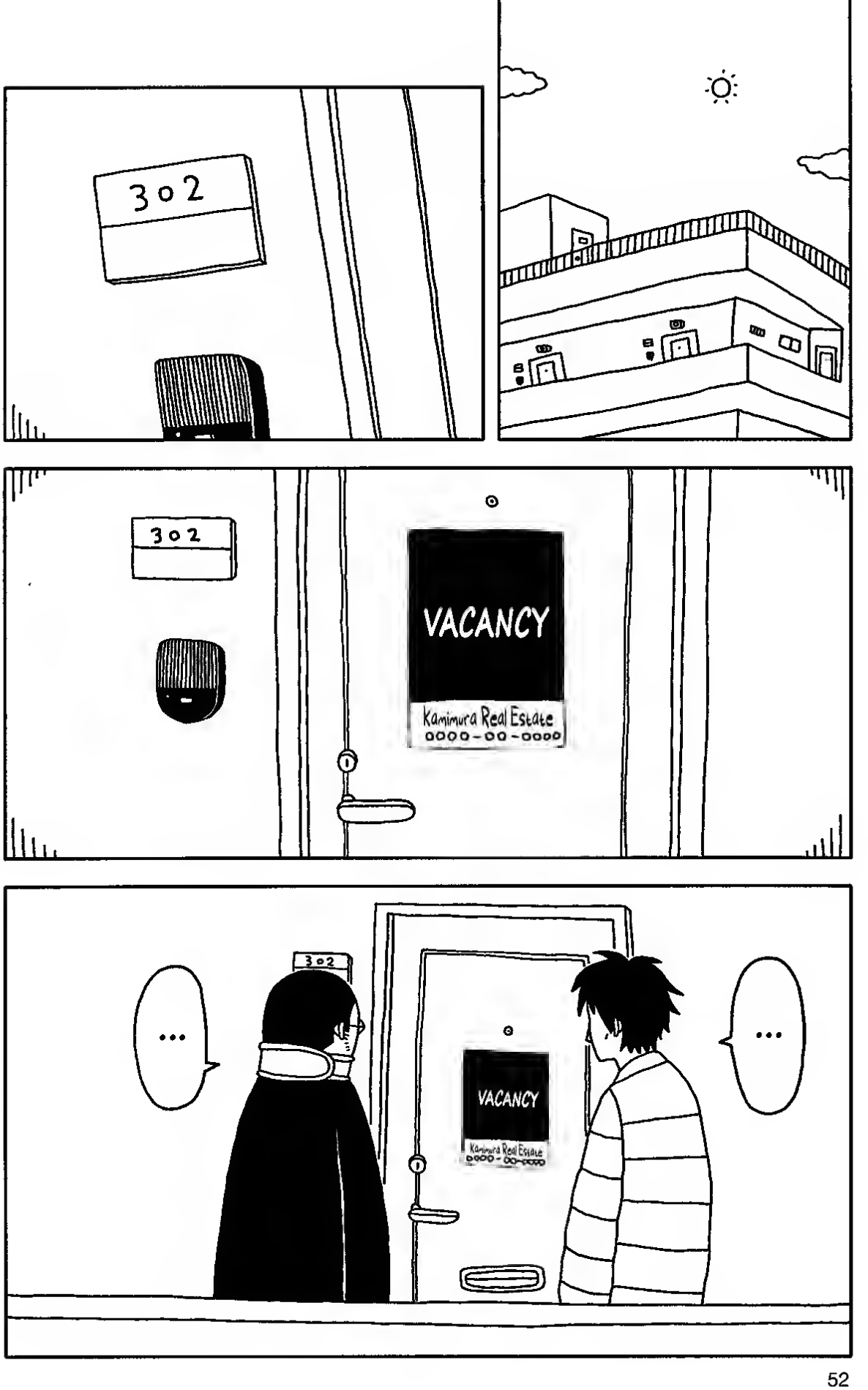

GOTTA TRY AND BE A DAD MY KID CAN BE PROUD OF!
...


(24)
(24)
HA HA!
GUESS THAT MEANS I BETTER GET A JOB, ANYWAY...

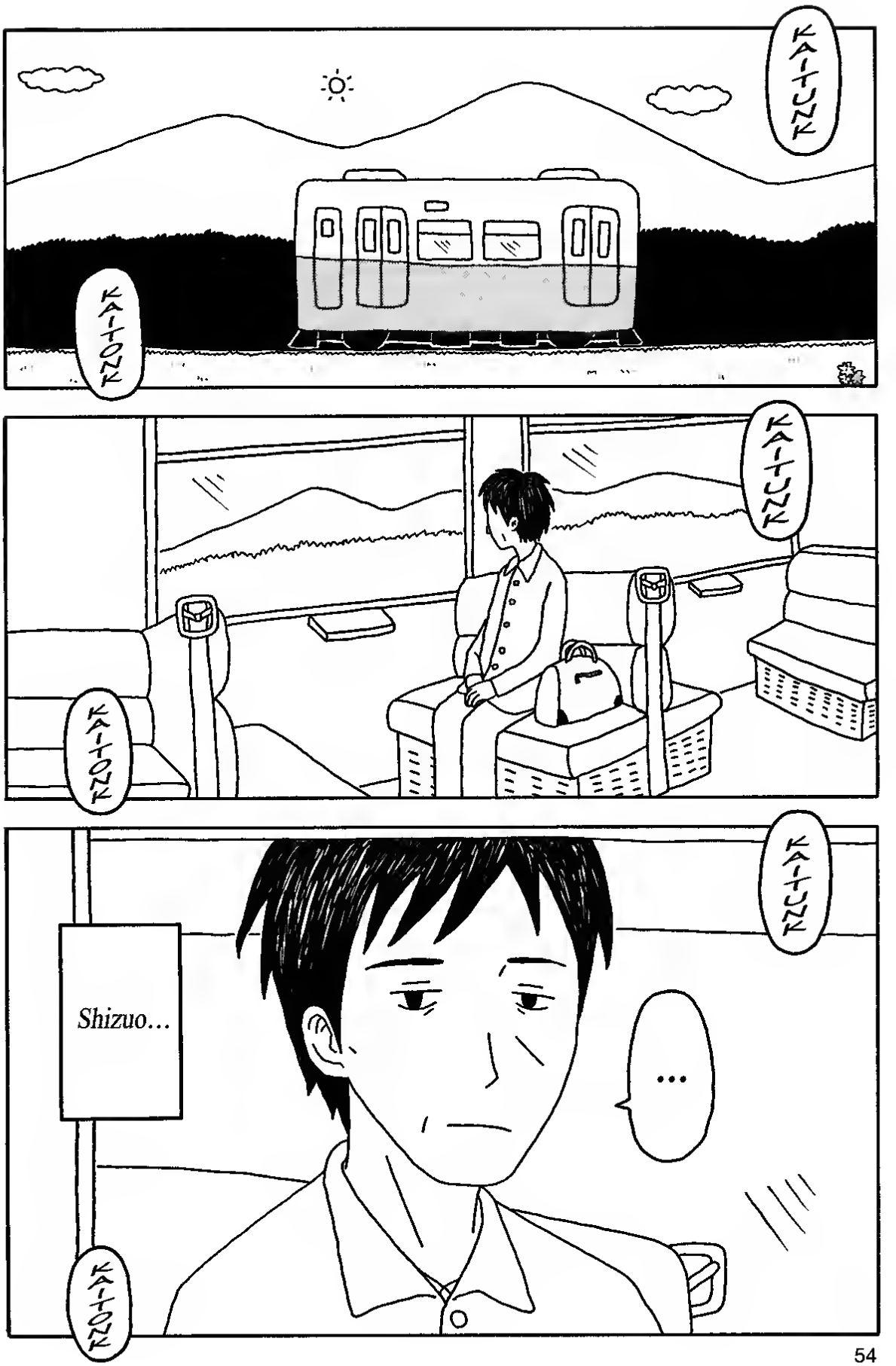
...
I'm sure Suzuko is proud of you.

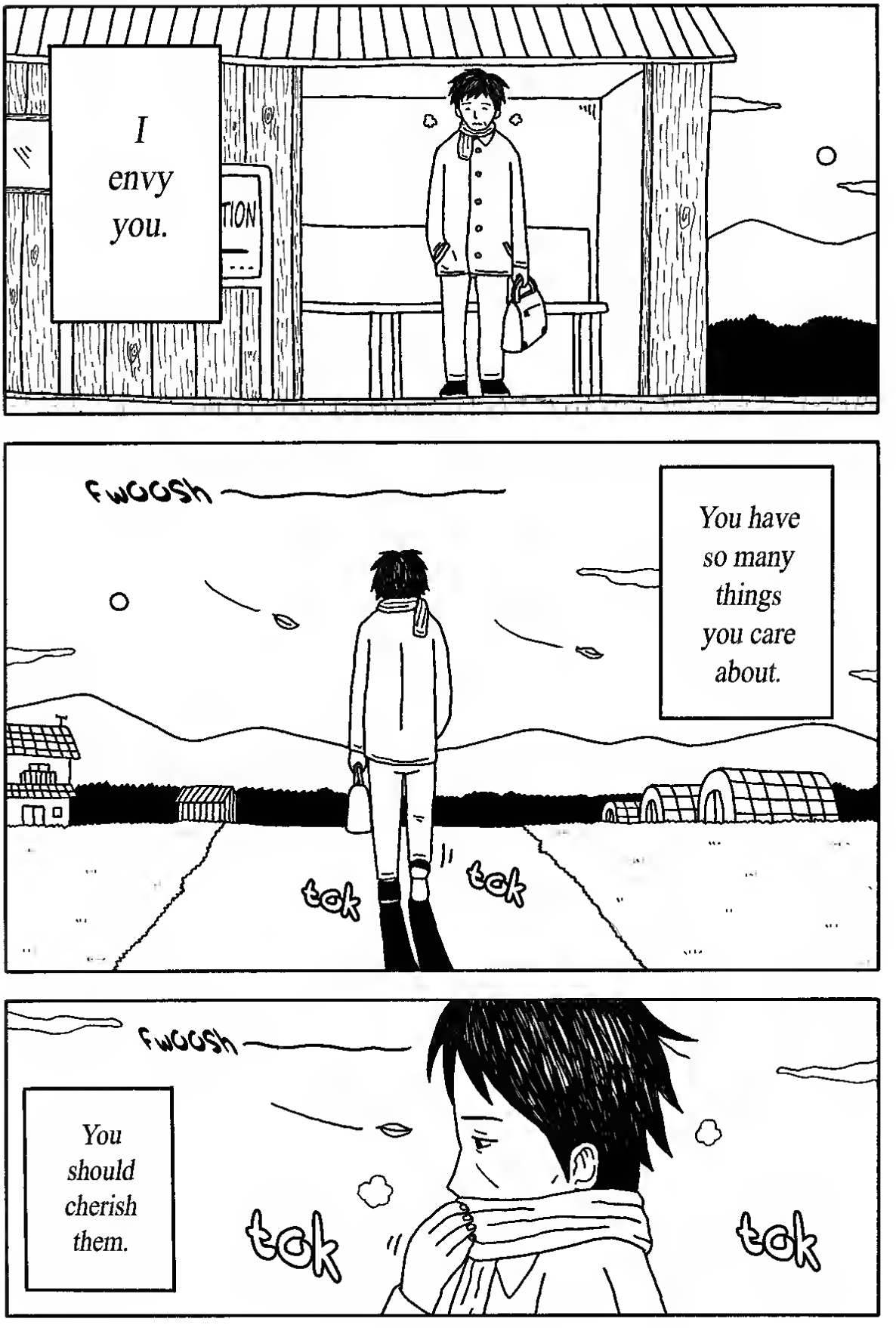

Shizuo
...
Congratulations!


munch
munch
IT'S GOOD.
I didn't want to be a model father or anything ...
But it didn't work out for me that way.
OH, GOOD ...
Just an ordinary dad. But I couldn't even manage that.

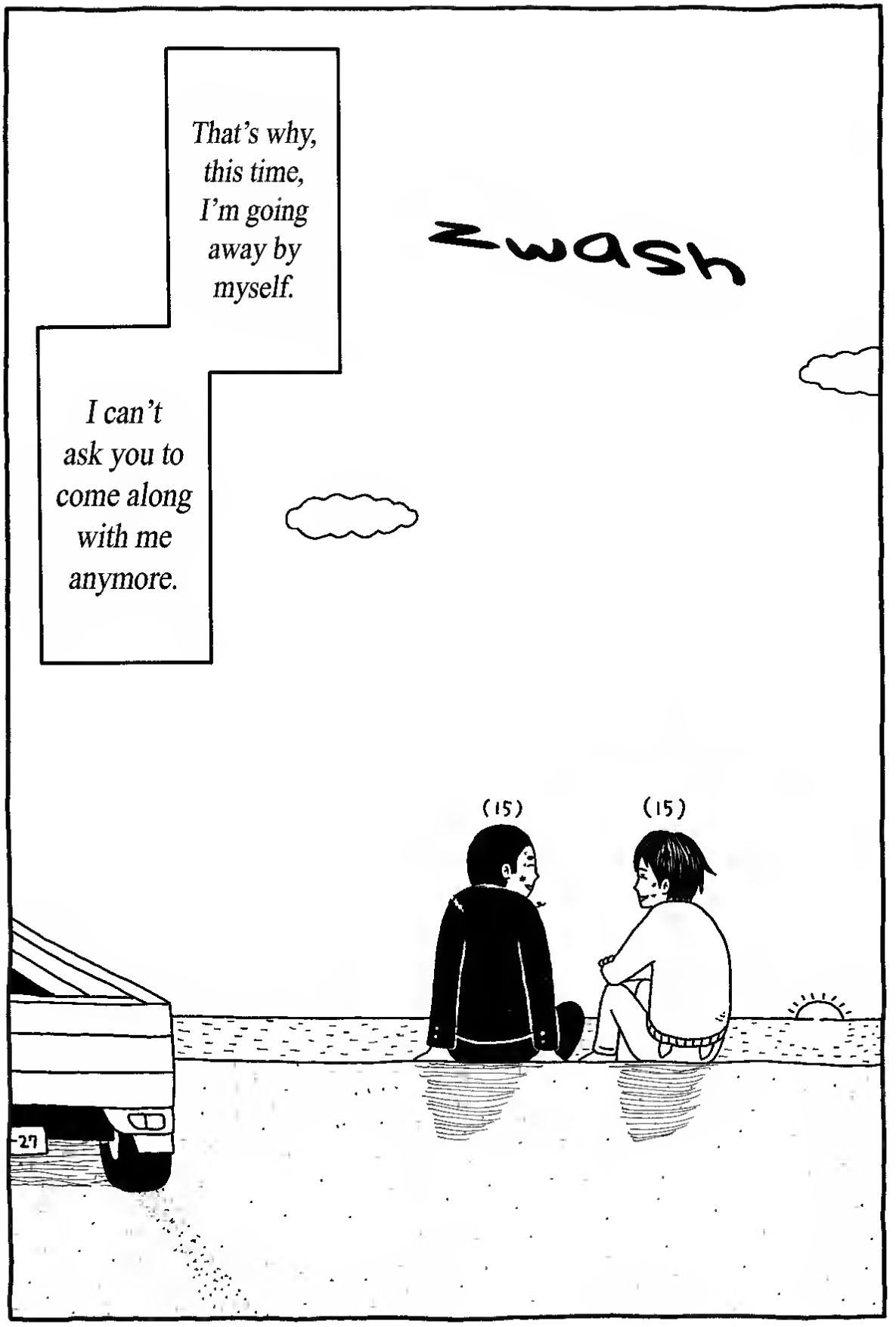

302
302
VACANCY
Kamimura Real Estate
0000-00-0000
302
VACANCY
Kamimura Real Estate
0000-00-0000
...
...

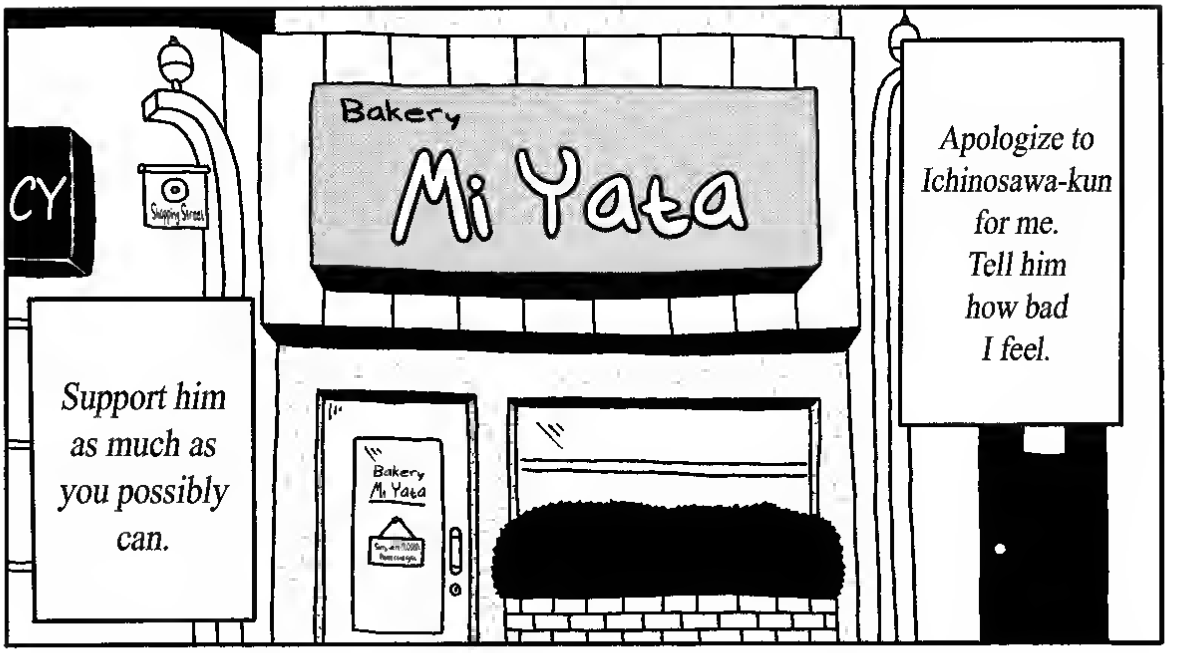
WHAT ABOUT HIS CELL PHONE, SHUICHI?
Did you try it?
YEAH ...
302
DAM-MIT ...!
...
rattle
rattle
The number you have reached is no longer in service.
HE'D ALREADY TERMINATED HIS CONTRACT ...
OH ...
SHIZUO-SAN...
302
302
VACANT
MIYATA ...
WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU GONE...?


KA-TUNK
KA-TONK
KA-TUNK
KA-TONK
KA-TUNK
Shizuo…
…
KA-TONK

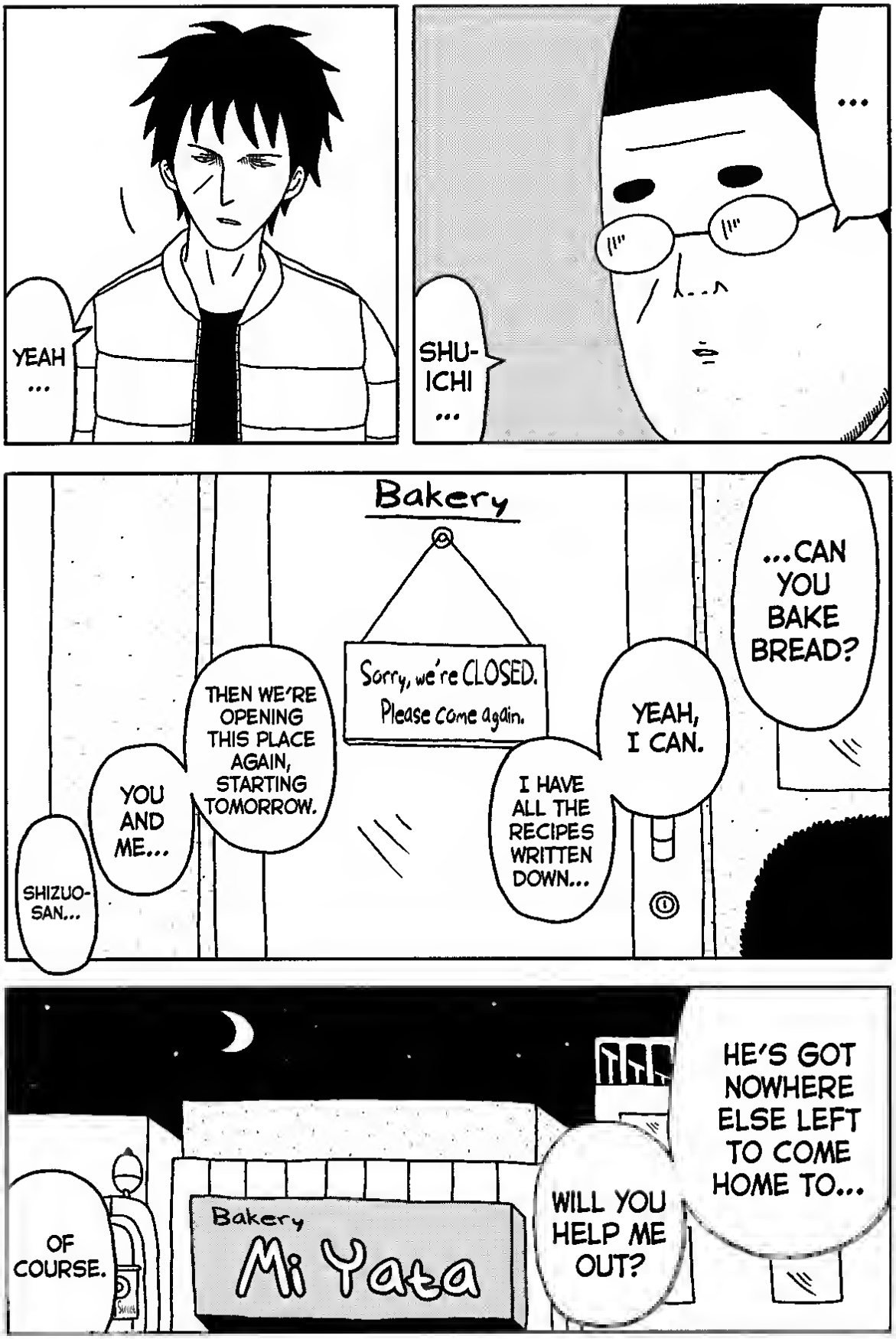

I envy you.
fwoosh
You have so many things you care about.
tak
tak
fwoosh
You should cherish them.
tak
tak

SHIZUO !
LET'S GO!
Hop in!
MIYATA ...
VRUM... VRUM
65-27
You...
...
That truck
I'LL DIE BY YOUR SIDE, BUDDY.

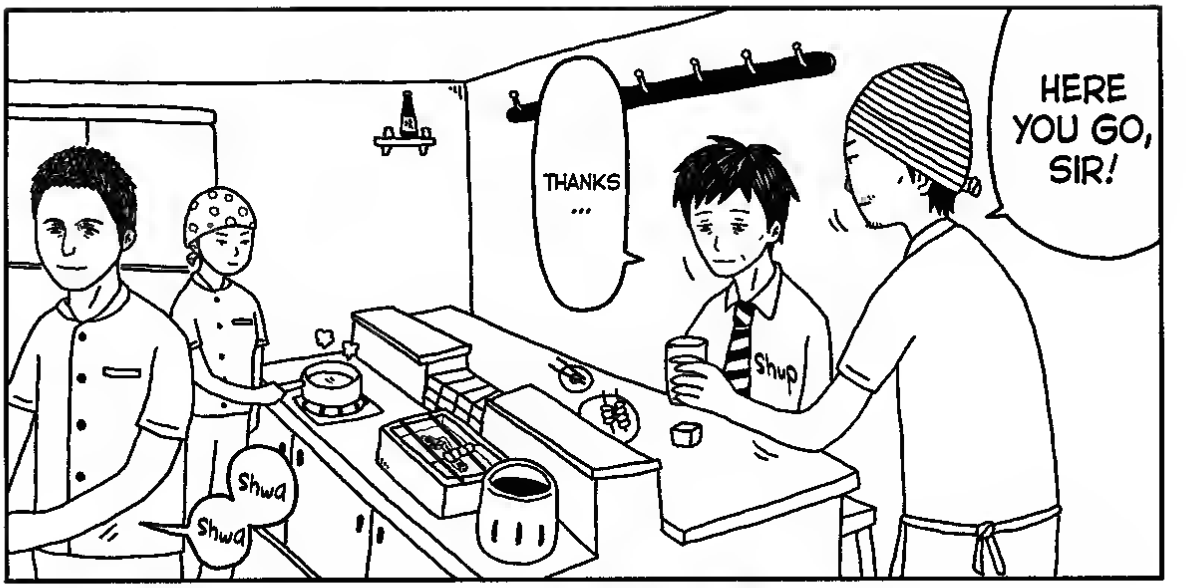

That's why, this time, I'm going away by myself.
I can't ask you to come along with me anymore.
zwash
(15)
(15)
27


Bakery
Mi Yata
Bakery
Mi Yata
Support him as much as you possibly can.
Apologize to Ichinosawa-kun for me. Tell him how bad I feel.

I know it's selfish of me to dump all this on him so soon after we started, and I'm sorry.


YEAH ...
SHU-ICHI ...
...
Bakery
Sorry, we're CLOSED. Please come again.
...CAN YOU BAKE BREAD?
YEAH, I CAN.
I HAVE ALL THE RECIPES WRITTEN DOWN...
THEN WE'RE OPENING THIS PLACE AGAIN, STARTING TOMORROW.
YOU AND ME...
SHIZUO-SAN...
HE'S GOT NOWHERE ELSE LEFT TO COME HOME TO...
WILL YOU HELP ME OUT?
Bakery Mi Yata
OF COURSE.

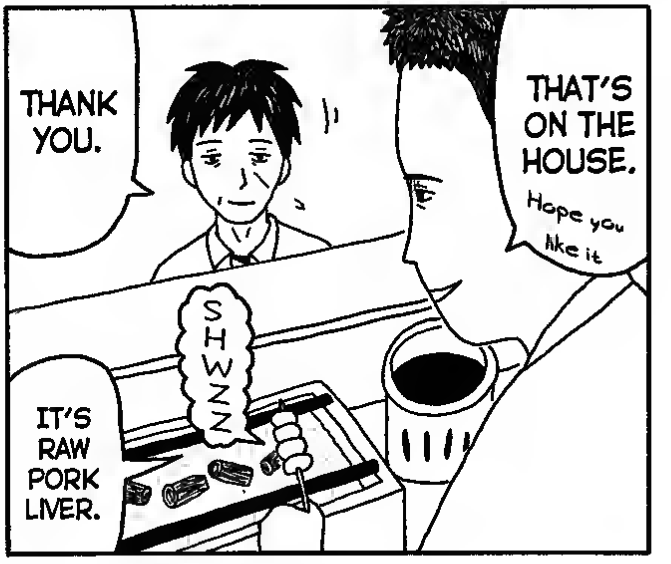
Oo-high: an Oolong Highball, made with shochu & oolong tea.


HERE YOU GO, SIR!
THANKS ...
Shup
Shwa
Shwa

?
Swup

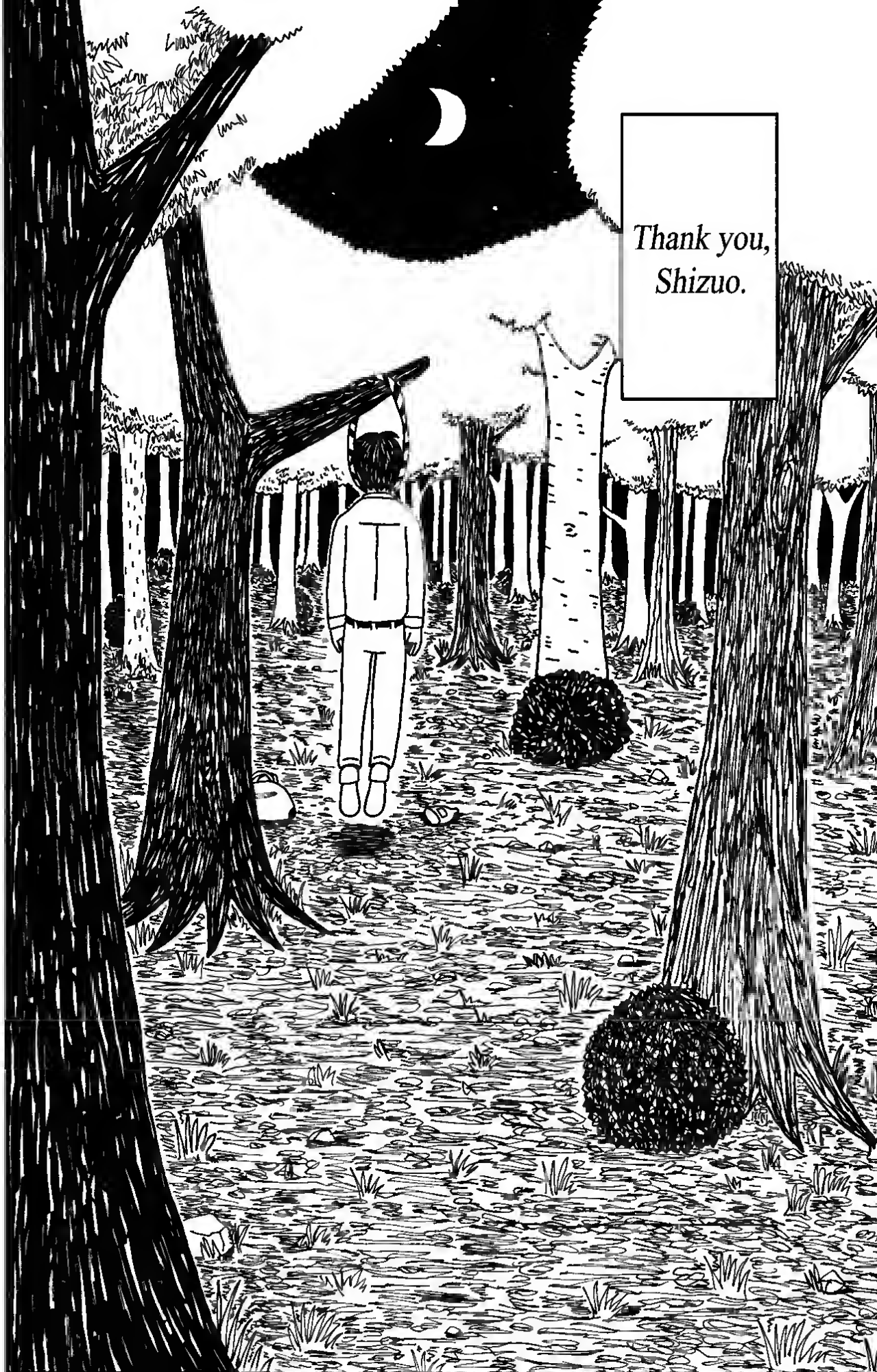
ARE YOU HERE ON BUSINESS ?
It's cold up here, isn't it?
YES ...

munch
munch


THANK YOU.
THAT'S ON THE HOUSE.
Hope you like it
SHWZZ
IT'S RAW PORK LIVER.

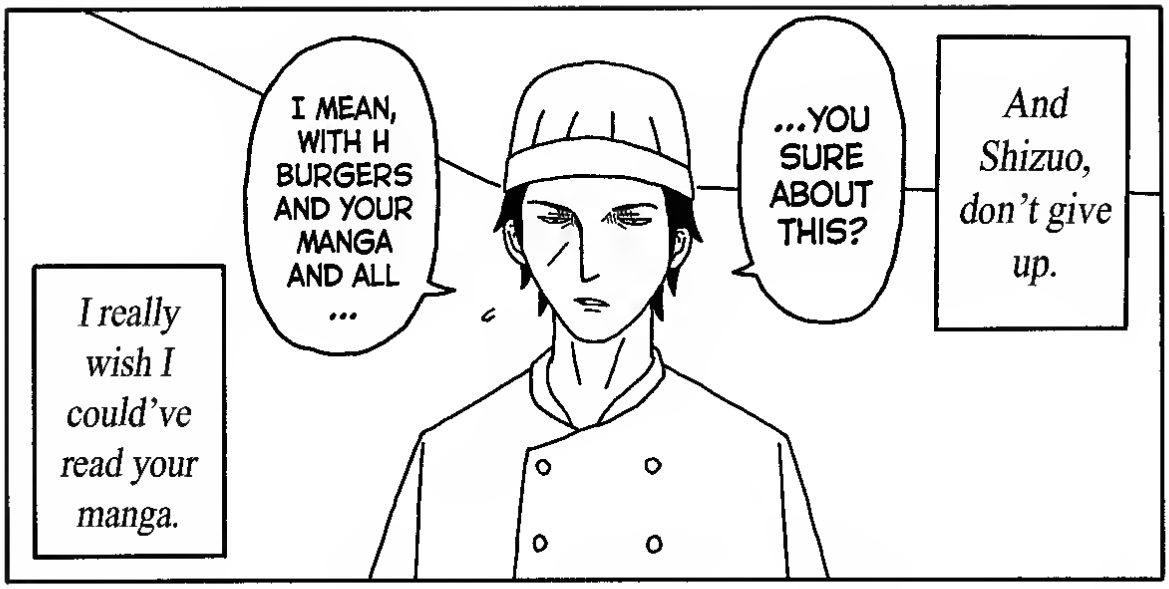
THIS IS REALLY GOOD ...
I THINK THIS MIGHT BE THE BEST RAW LIVER I'VE EVER HAD...
THANK YOU!
sake
sake
Makkoli
YES, SIR!
EXCUSE ME. CHECK, PLEASE ...
...
munch
munch
stare
stare
THANKS. IT WAS DELICIOUS ...
dip
THANK YOU!
Take care on your way.
No graffiti

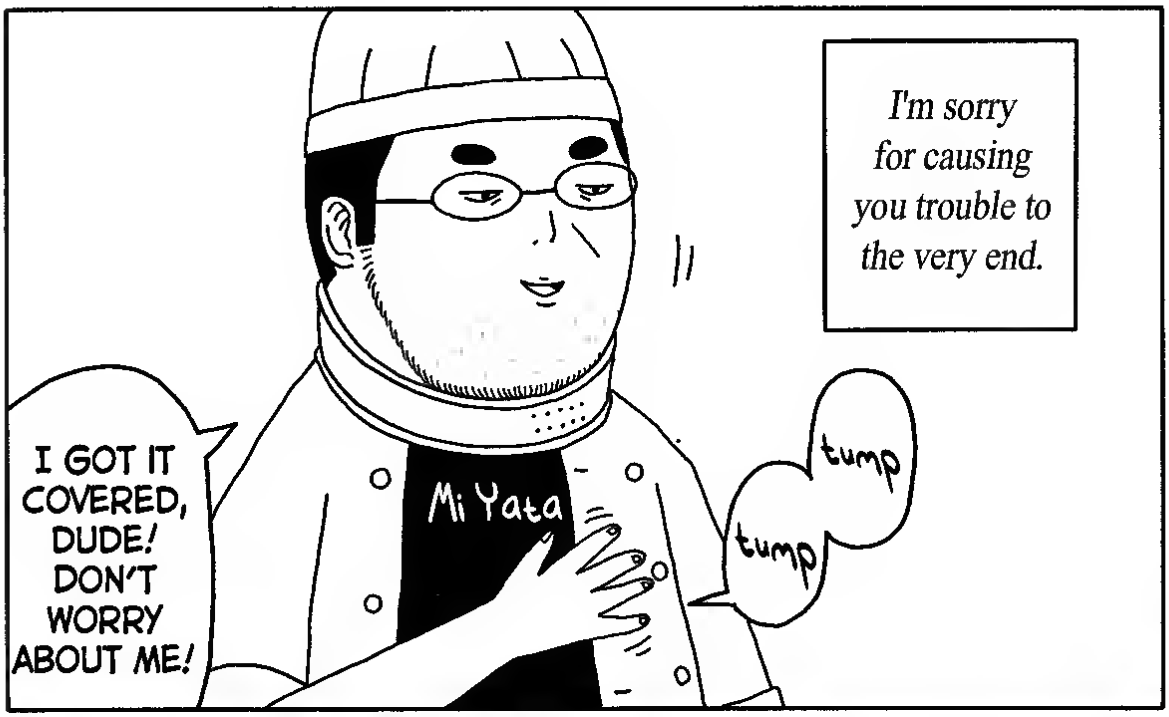
gulp
gulp
gulp
gulp
vodka
sling
I have a feeling that meeting you was the reason I managed to keep going until now.
HA HA HA HA!
ENOUGH ALREADY ...
bulge
bulge
brp
brp
brp
brp
tok
tok
tok

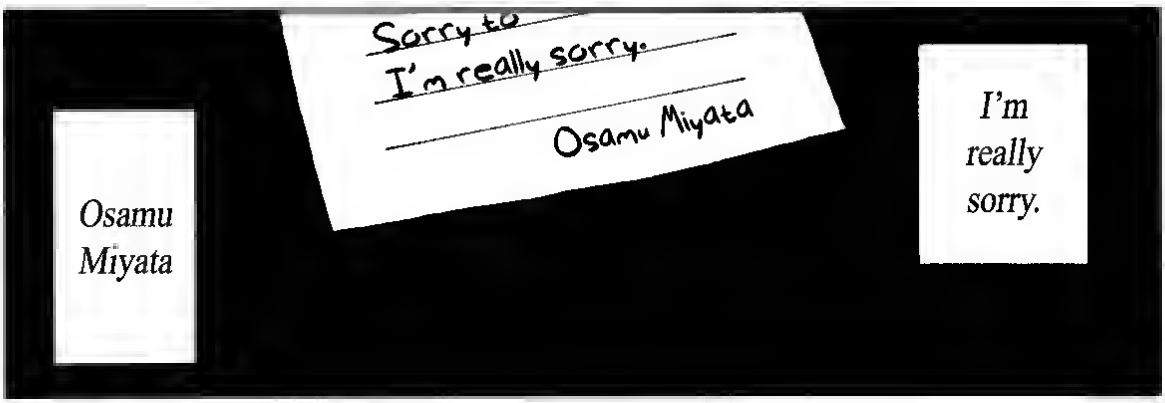

Thank you,
Shizuo.

I mean it.
Thank you.

kreek

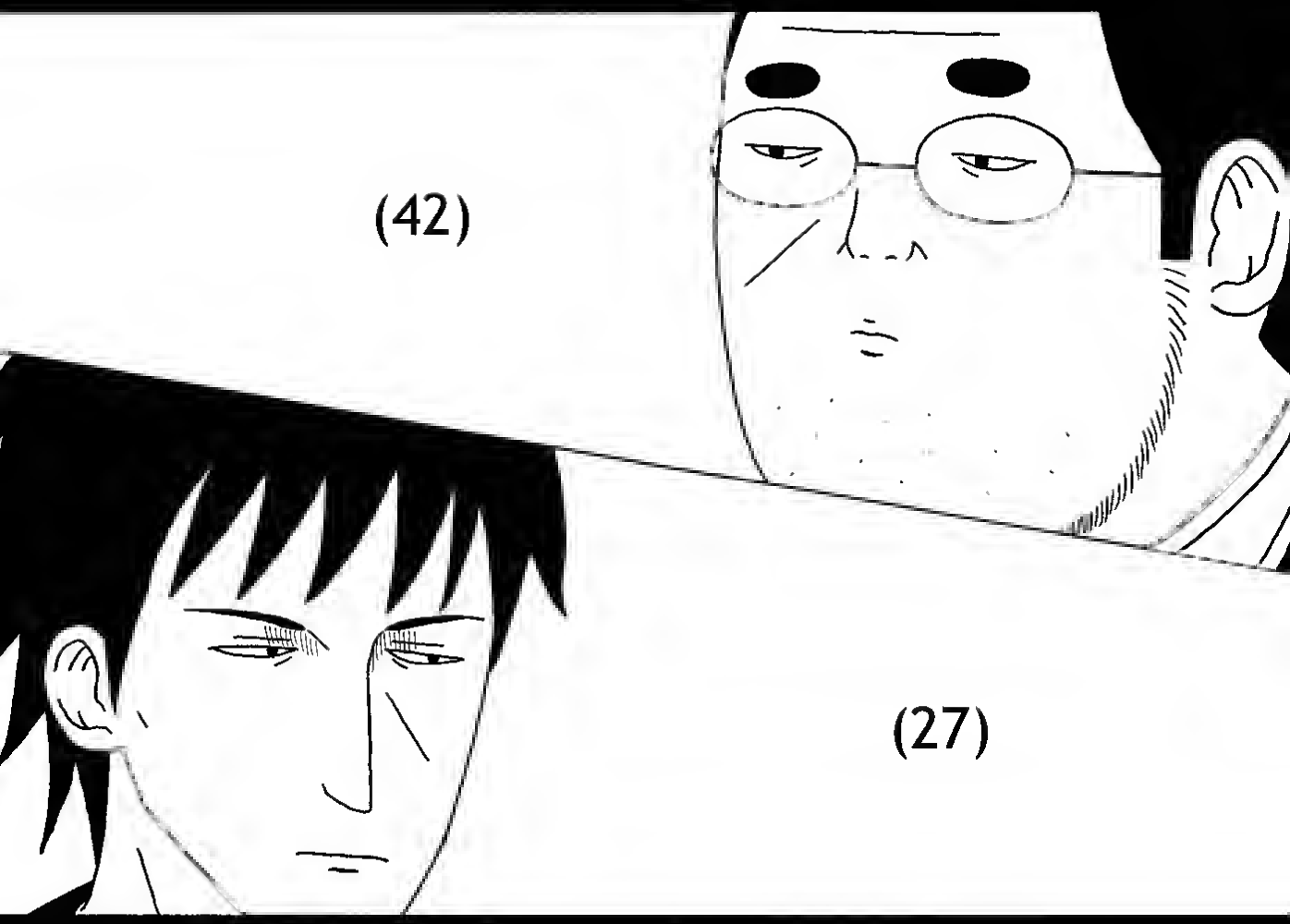

I really wish I could've read your manga.
I MEAN, WITH H BURGERS AND YOUR MANGA AND ALL ...
...YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
And Shizuo, don't give up.


I GOT IT COVERED, DUDE! DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!
Mi Yata
tump
tump
I'm sorry for causing you trouble to the very end.

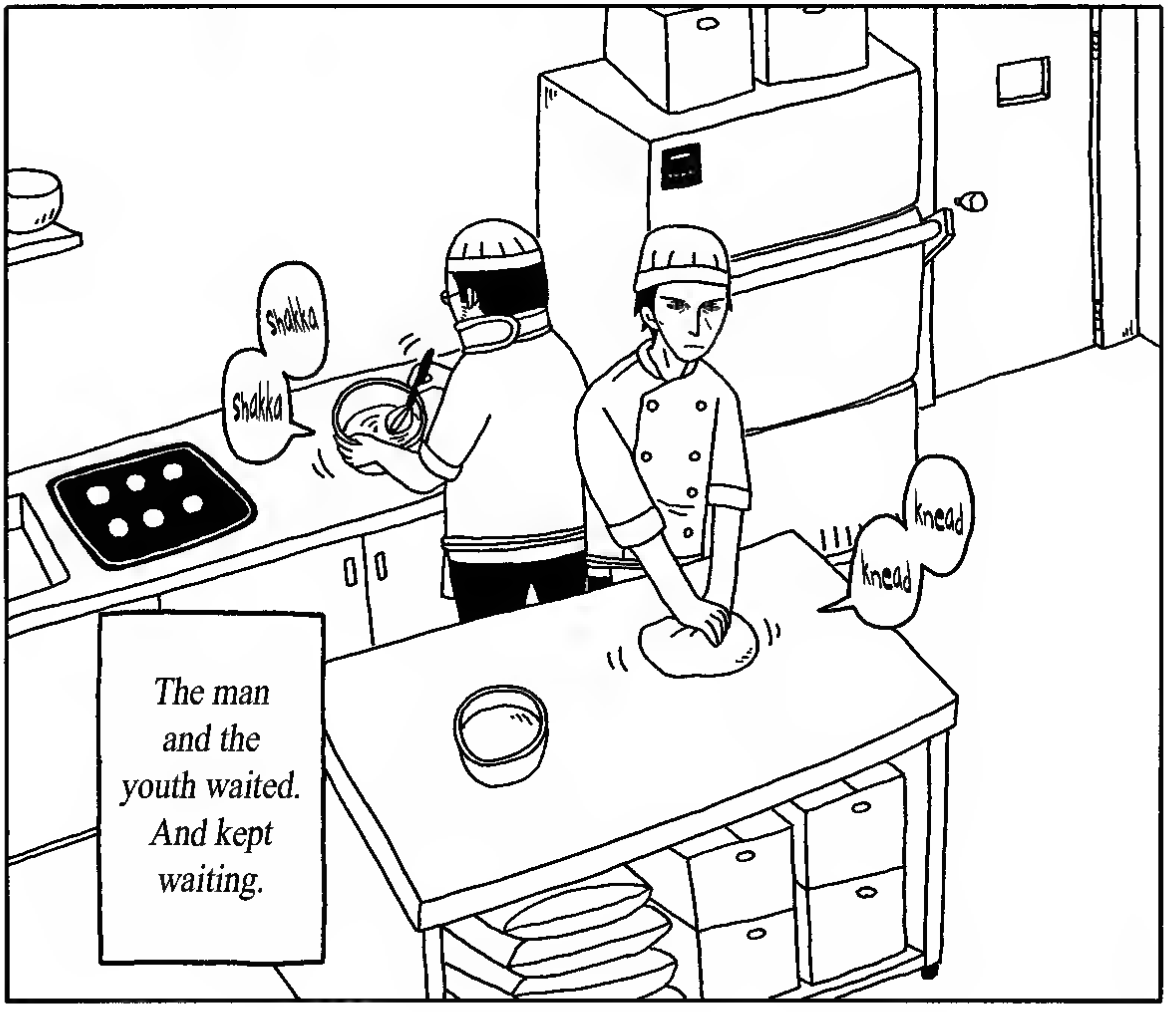

Osamu Miyata
Sorry to
I'm really sorry.
Osamu Miyata
I'm really sorry.

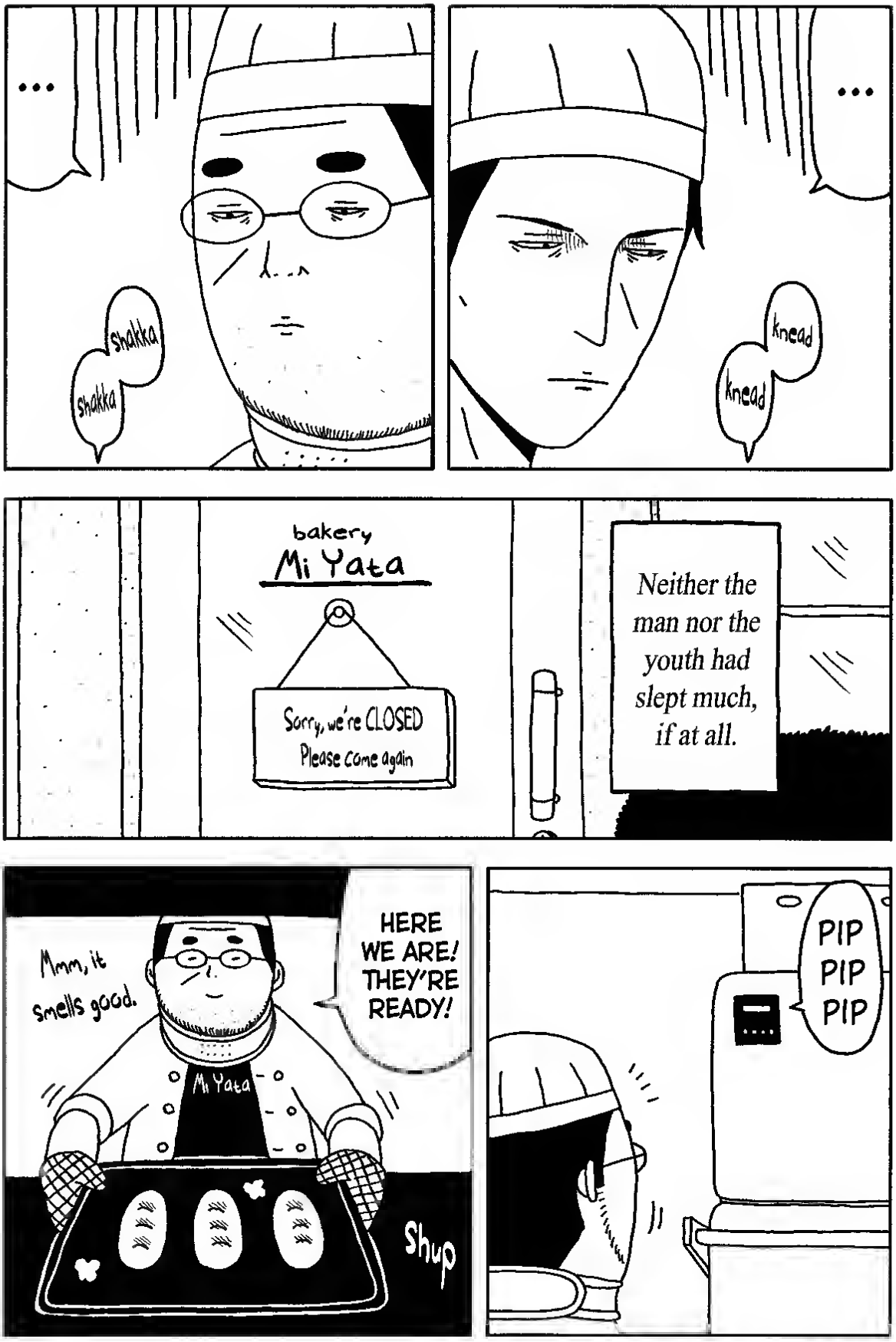
Chapter 25:

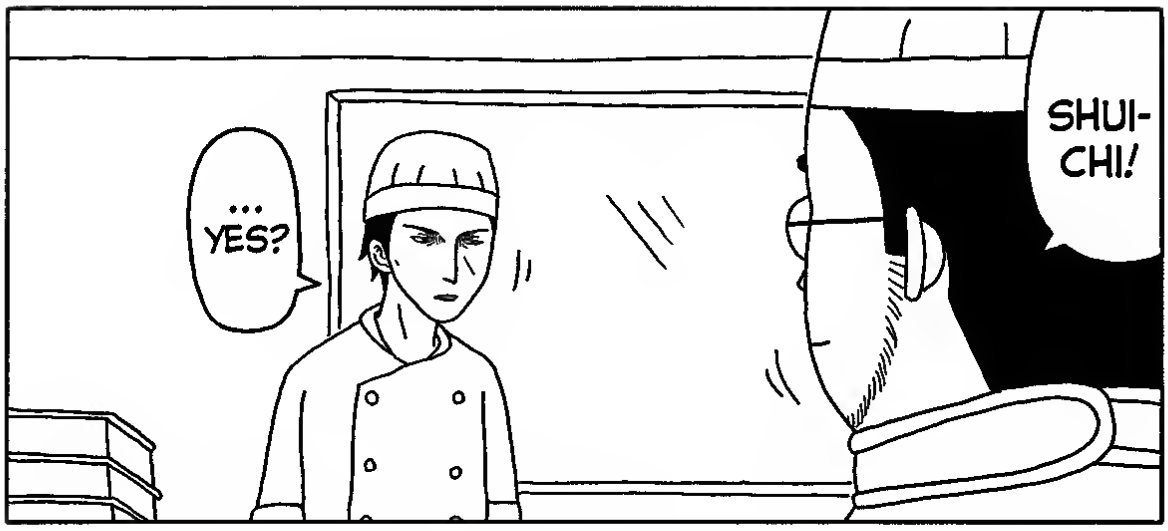
The Middle-Aged and the Young

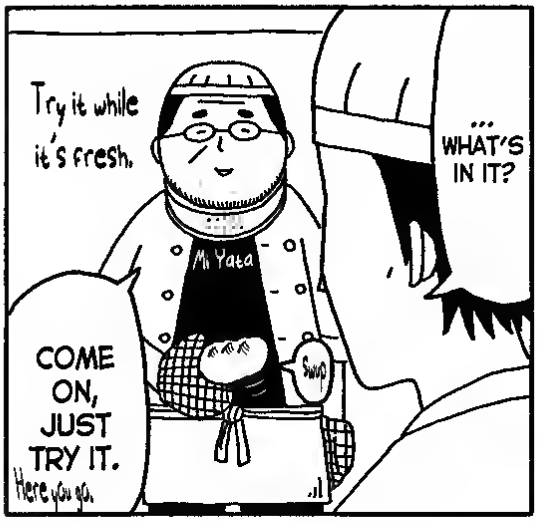


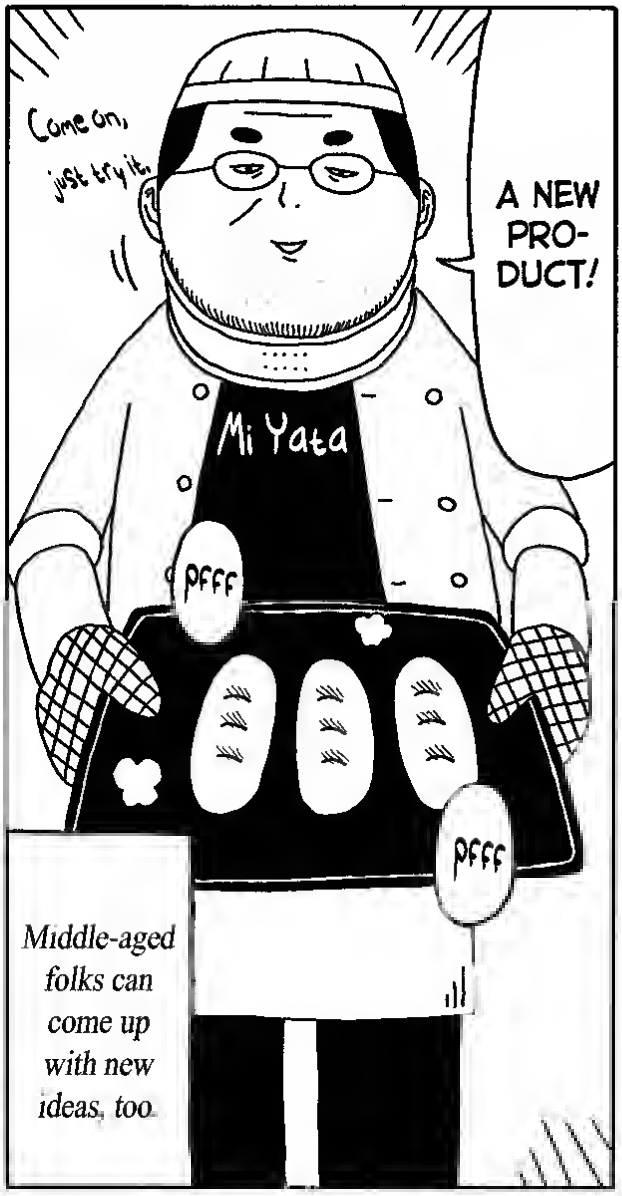
Five days have gone by.
Bakery
Mi Yata
For both the middle-aged and the young, time passes equally.
Bakery
Mi Yata


Shakka
Shakka
knead
knead
The man and the youth waited. And kept waiting.


...
shakka
shakka
...
knead
knead
bakery
Mi Yata
Sorry, we're CLOSED
Please come again
Neither the man nor the youth had slept much, if at all.
Mmm, it smells good.
HERE WE ARE! THEY'RE READY!
Mi Yata
Shup
PIP
PIP
PIP

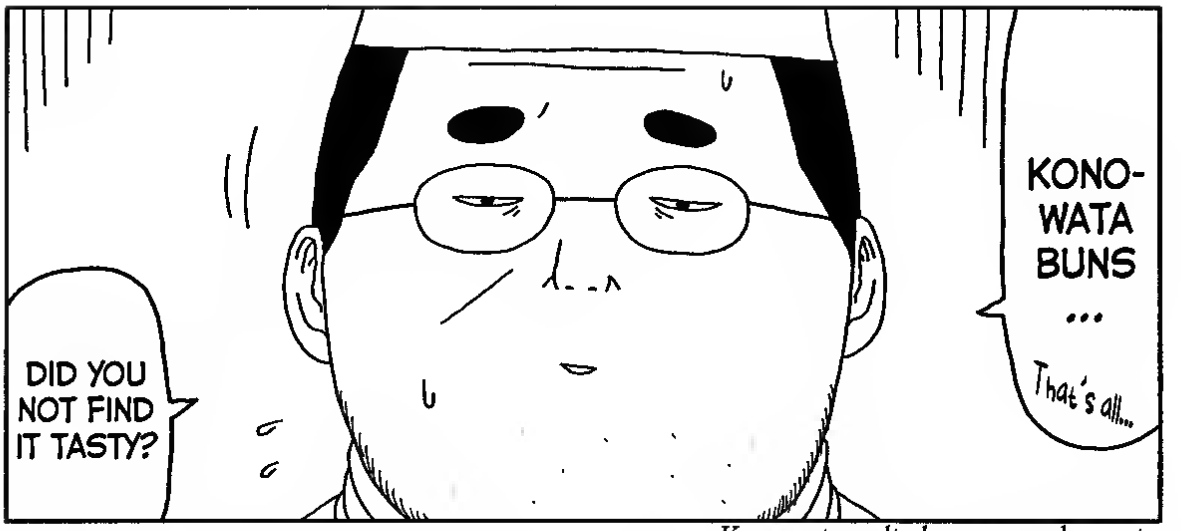

SHUI-CHI!
...YES?


Try it while it's fresh.
...WHAT'S IN IT?
Mi Yata
COME ON, JUST TRY IT.
Here you go.
Swap

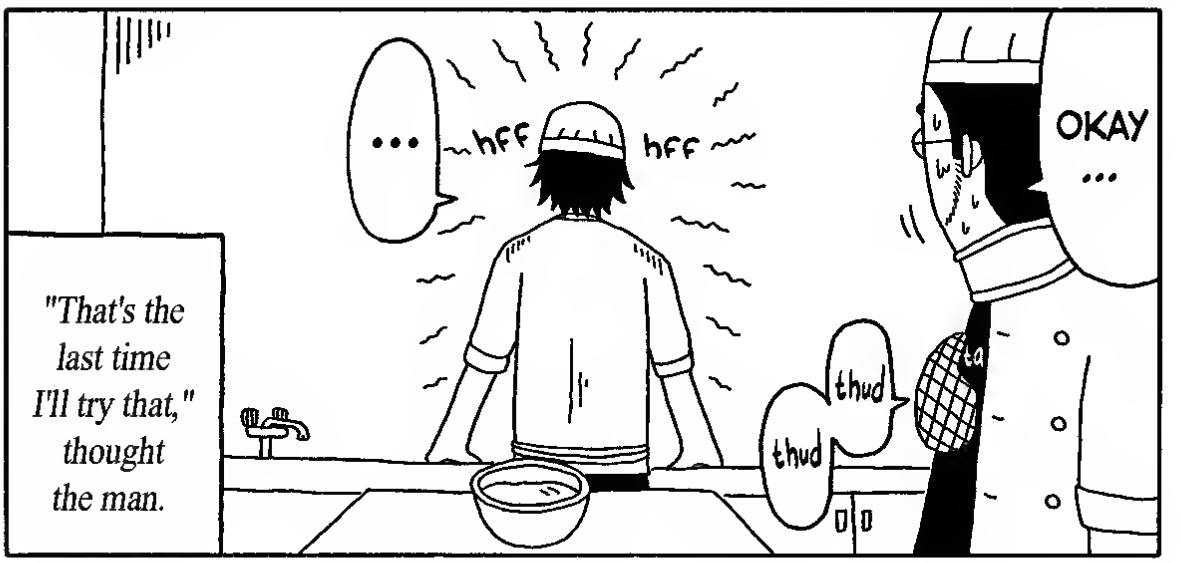

Come on, just try it.
A NEW PRO-DUCT!
Mi Yata
pfff
pfff
Middle-aged folks can come up with new ideas, too.

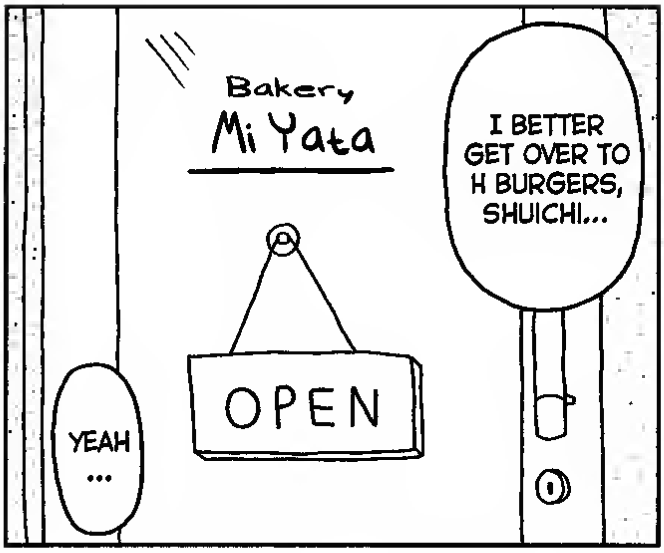
Chomp
...

UH-OH ...?
peh
peh
BLAAARRGH!
wind-up
klench
squash
pwoon
UGH ...
SHIZUO-SAN...
... YES?
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
?!
yikes
SPLAT
vwum

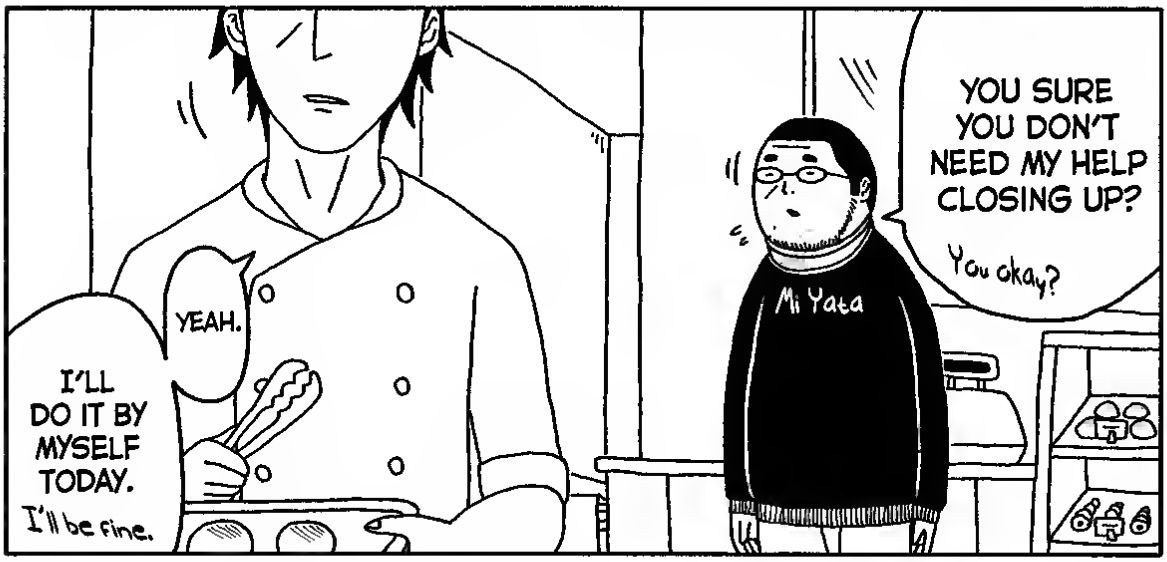


Konowata: salted sea cucumber guts.



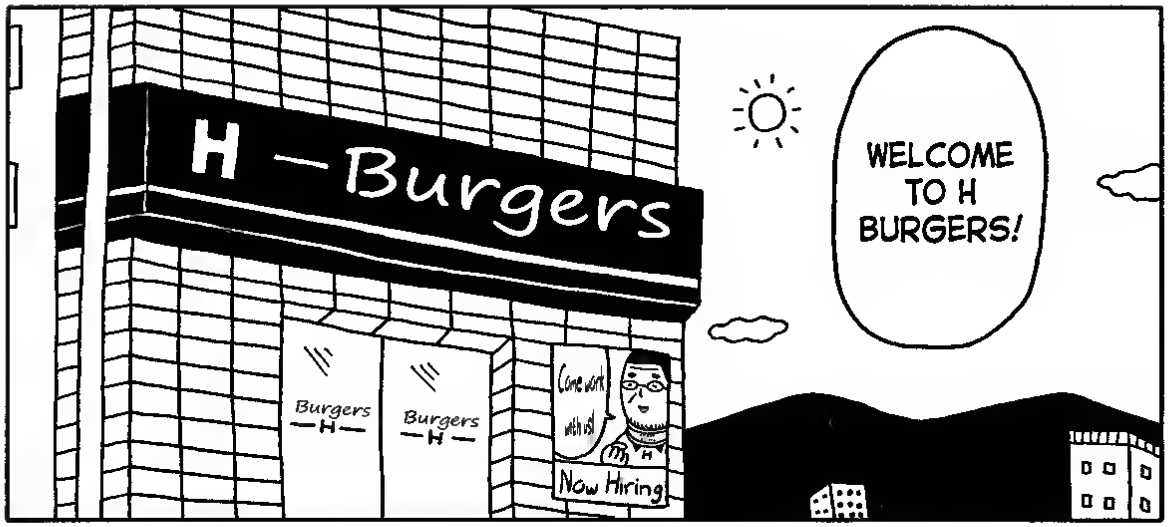

Bakery
Mi Yata
OPEN
YEAH ...
I BETTER GET OVER TO H BURGERS, SHUICHI...

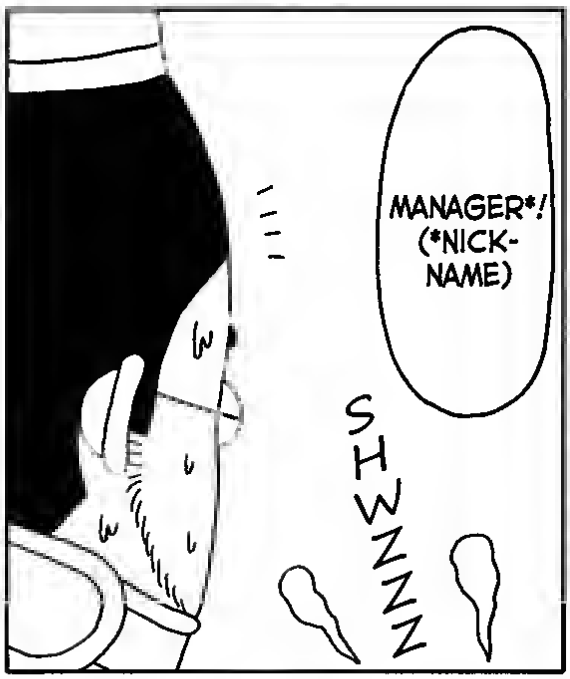
yak yak hub bub
Shopping Street
ICHIRO
DRUGS
KAWAMATA PHARMAC
Akiyama Store


YEAH.
I'LL DO IT BY MYSELF TODAY.
I'll be fine.
Mi Yata
YOU SURE YOU DON'T NEED MY HELP CLOSING UP?
You okay?

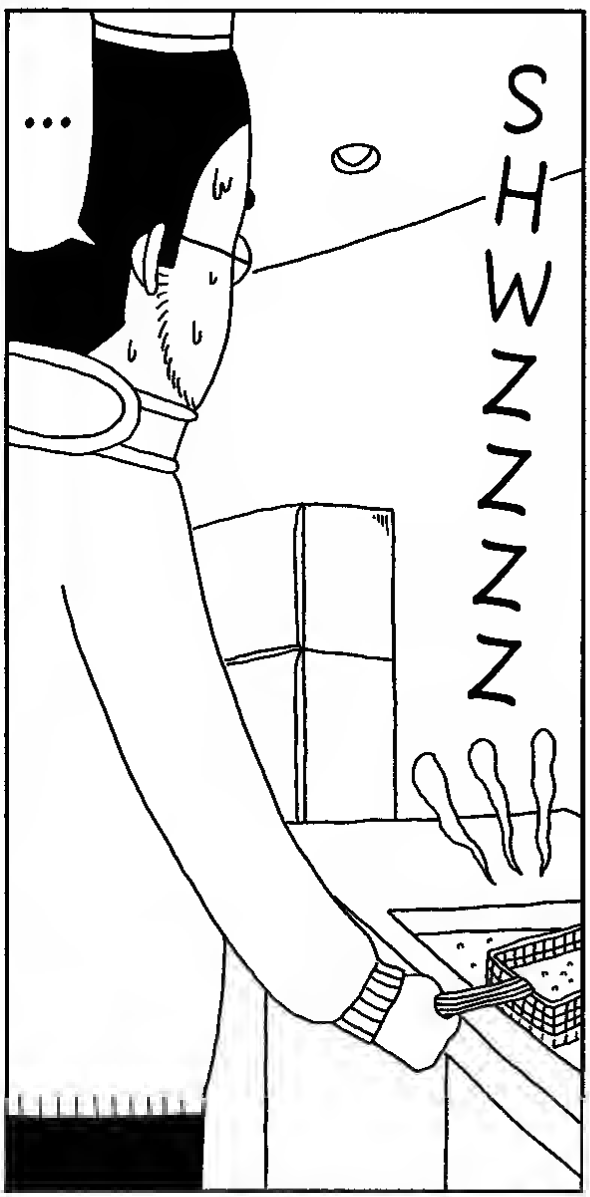
I OWE YOU ONE ...
Mi Yata
SHU-ICHI ...
This morning's incident included...

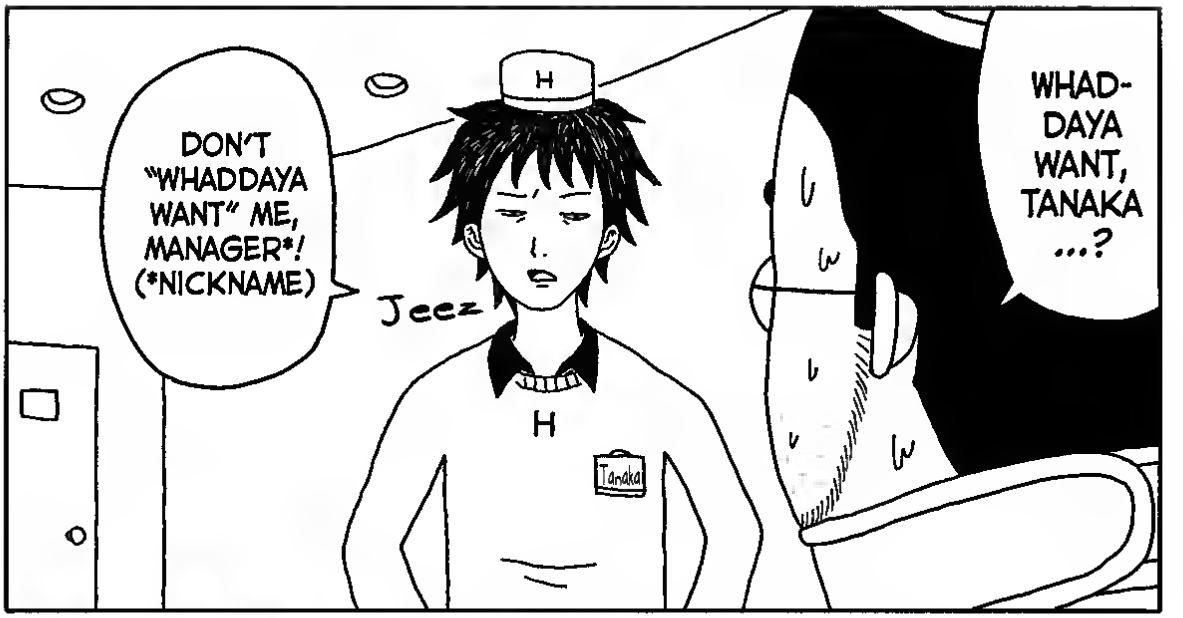
YOU'VE BEEN WORKING REALLY HARD.
turn
YOU SHOULD TRY AND GET A LITTLE REST.

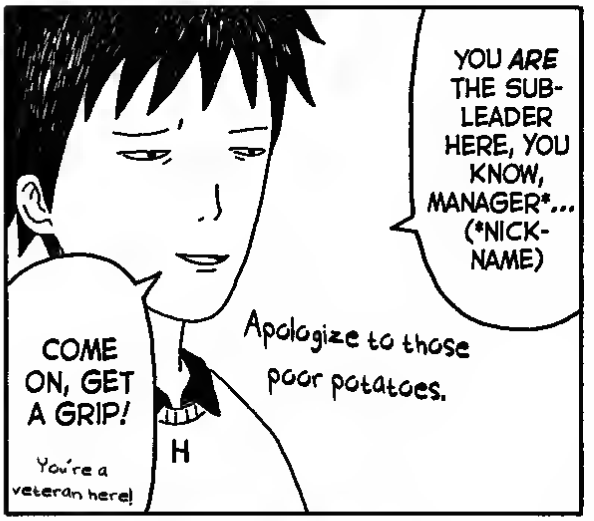

H - Burgers
Burgers
H
Burgers
H
Come work with us!
Now Hiring
WELCOME TO H BURGERS!

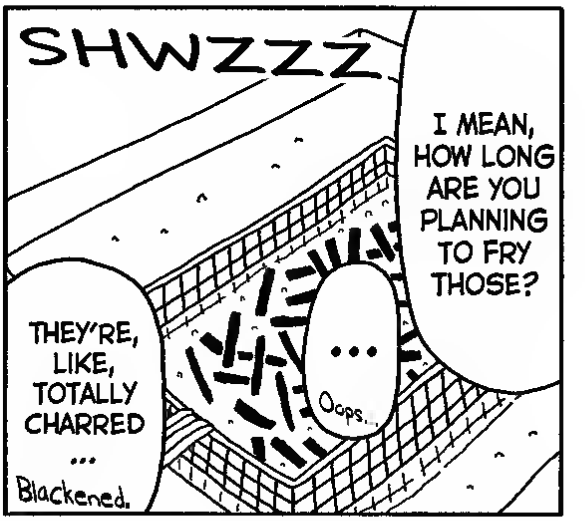

MANAGER*! (*NICK-NAME)
SHWNNN

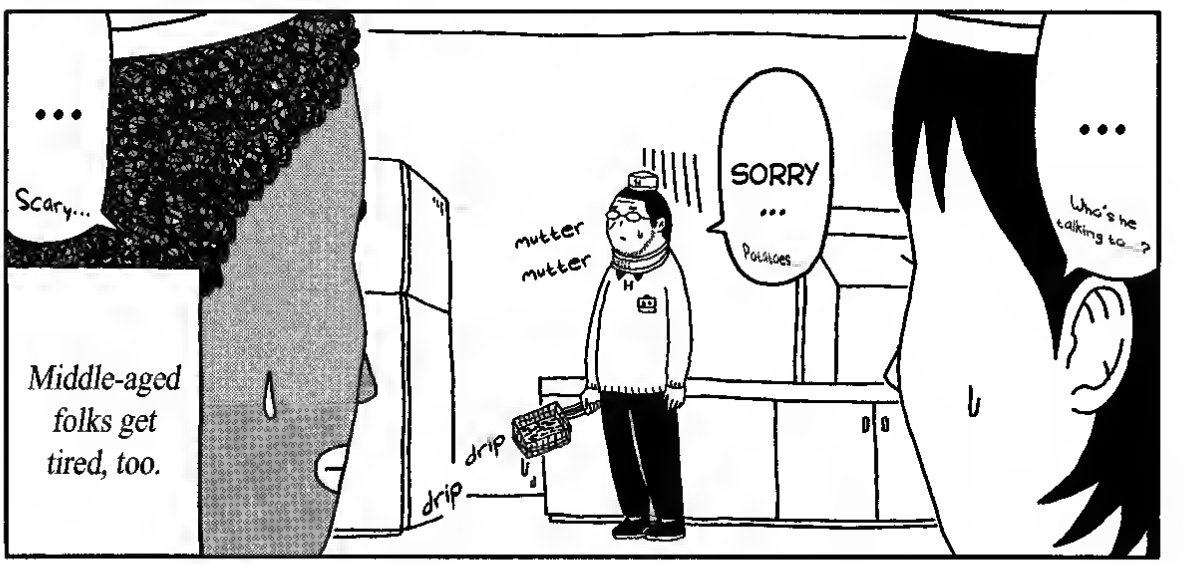
turn
...


...
SHWNNN

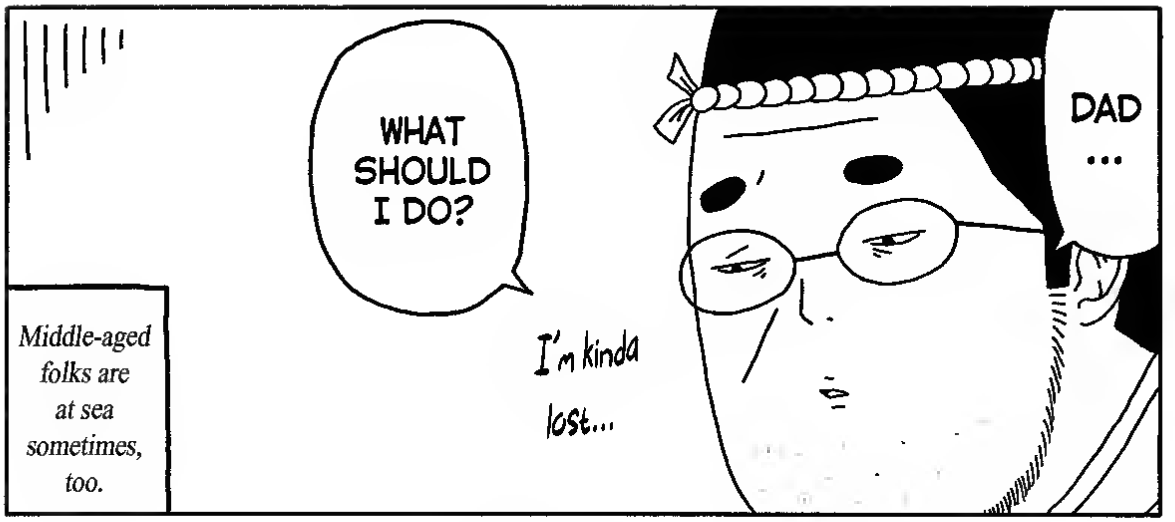

DON'T "WHADDAYA WANT" ME, MANAGER*! (*NICKNAME)
Jeez
H
Tanaka
WHAD-DAYA WANT, TANAKA ...?

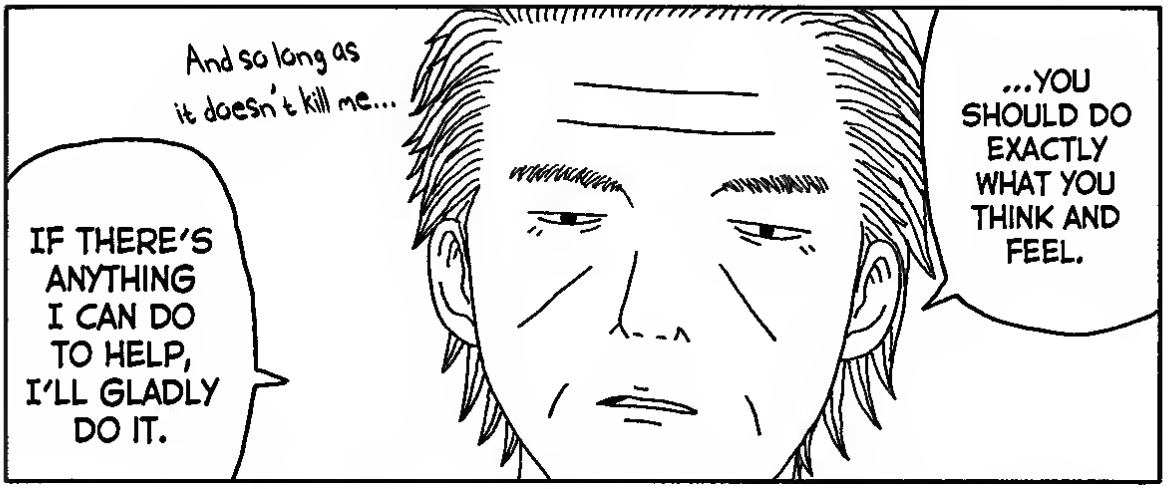

YOU ARE THE SUB-LEADER HERE, YOU KNOW, MANAGER*... (*NICK-NAME)
Apologize to those poor potatoes.
COME ON, GET A GRIP!
You're a veteran here!
H

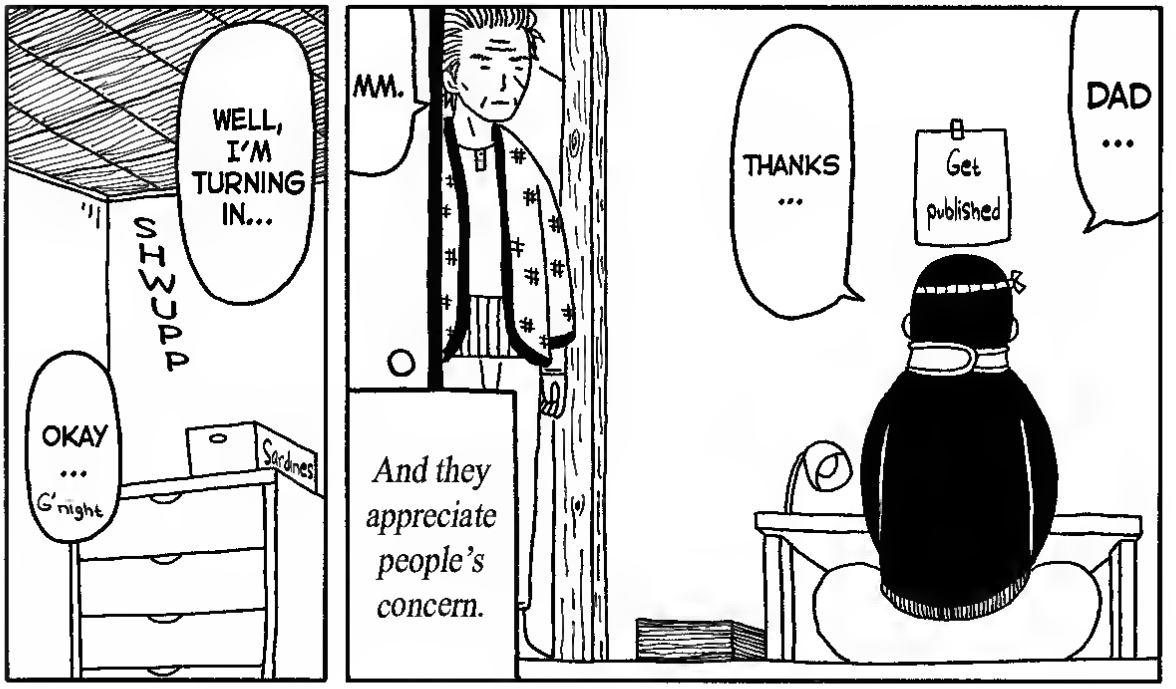

SHWZZZ
I MEAN, HOW LONG ARE YOU PLANNING TO FRY THOSE?
...
Oops.
THEY'RE, LIKE, TOTALLY CHARRED ...
Blackened.

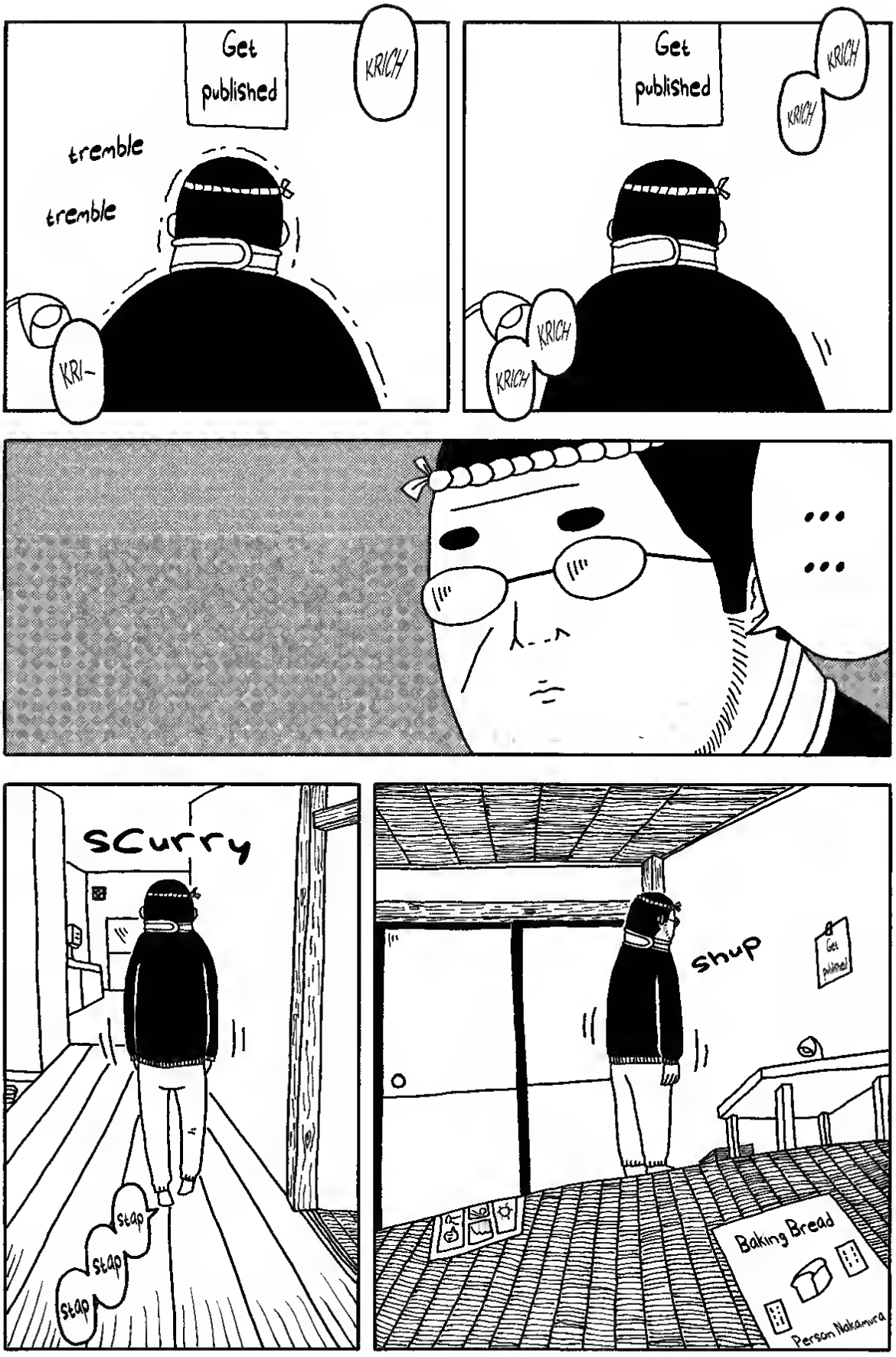

...
Scary...
Middle-aged folks get tired, too.
mutter mutter
drip
drip
SORRY ...
Potatoes
...
Who's he talking to...?

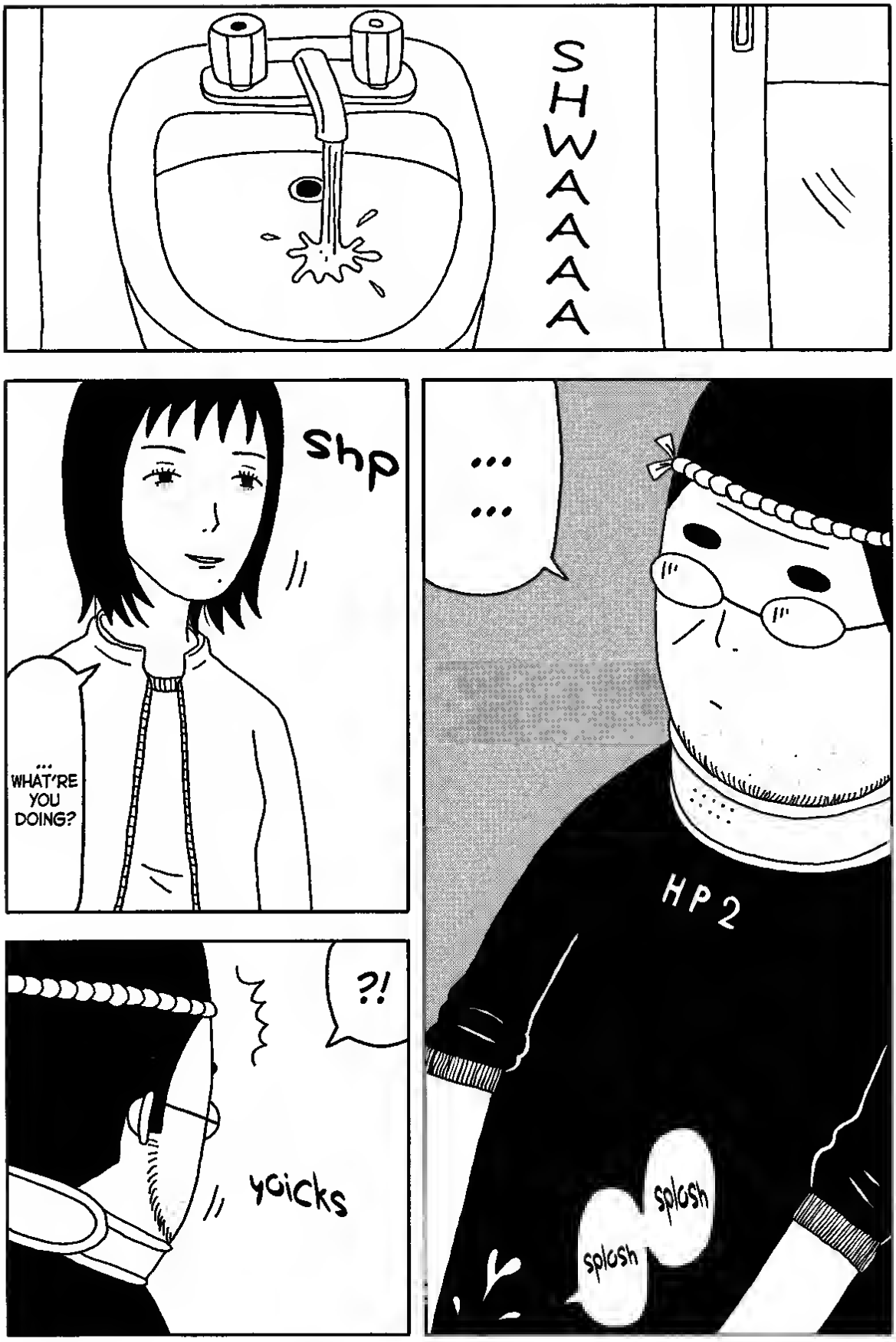
KRICH
KRICH
Get published
KRICH
KRICH
A
B
A LETTER ...
KRICH
KRICH
APPROACH IT IN THE SPIRIT OF ADDRESSING ANOTHER PERSON, LIKE YOU'RE WRITING A LETTER...
...MIYATA-KUN ISN'T BACK YET?
...No word from him either?
SHWUPP
I'M COMING IN...

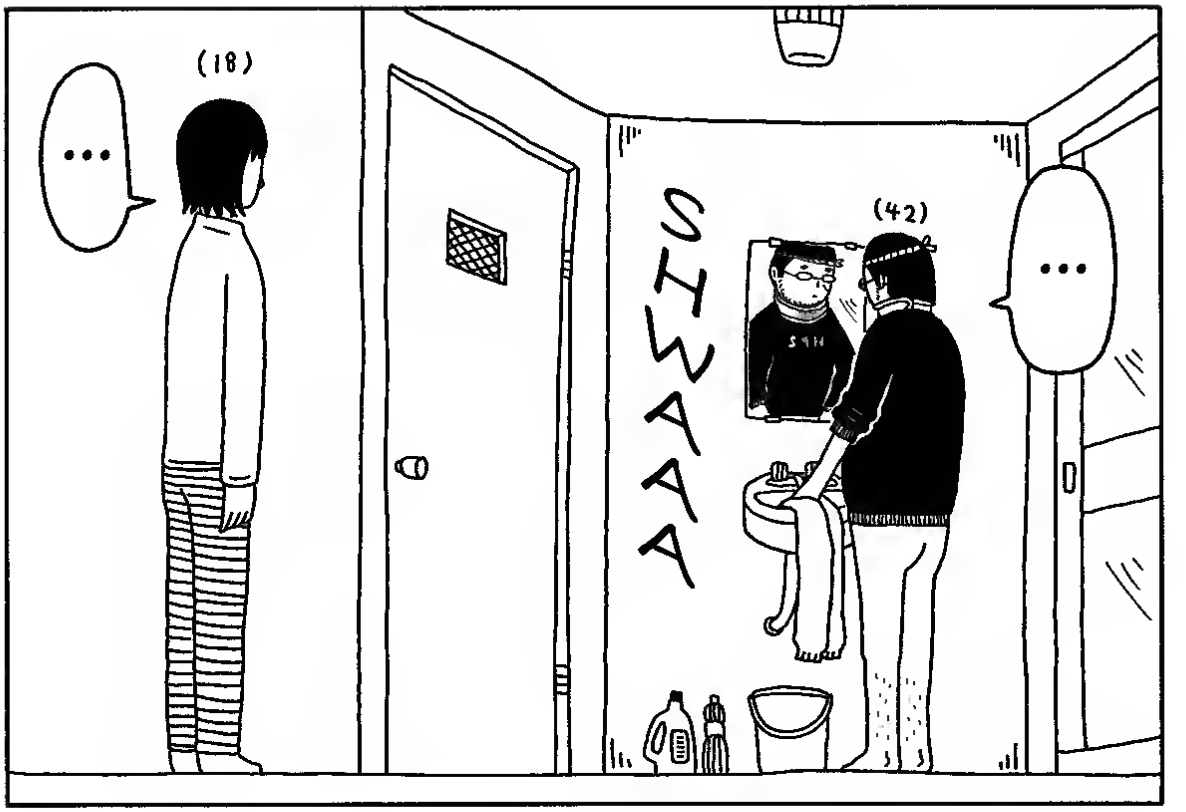

Middle-aged folks are at sea sometimes, too.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I'm kinda lost...
DAD ...

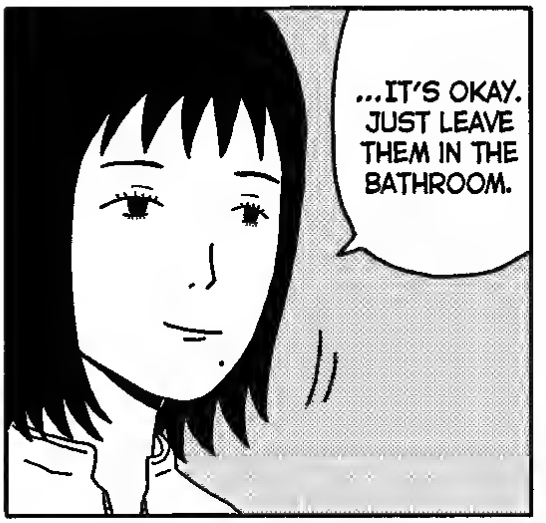

IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP, I'LL GLADLY DO IT.
And so long as it doesn't kill me...
...YOU SHOULD DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU THINK AND FEEL.

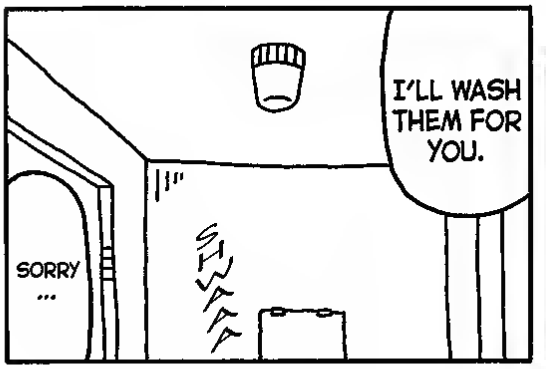

WELL, I'M TURNING IN...
SHWUPP
OKAY ... G'night
Sardines
MM.
And they appreciate people's concern.
THANKS ...
Get published
DAD ...


Get published
KRICH
tremble
tremble
KRI-
Get published
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
...
...
sCurry
stap
stap
stap
shup
Get published
Baking Bread
Person Nakamura

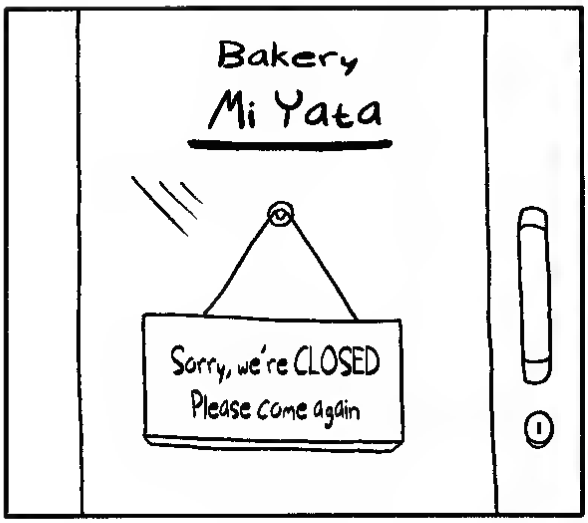

SHWAAAA
shp
...
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
?!
yoicks
...
...
HP2
splosh
splosh

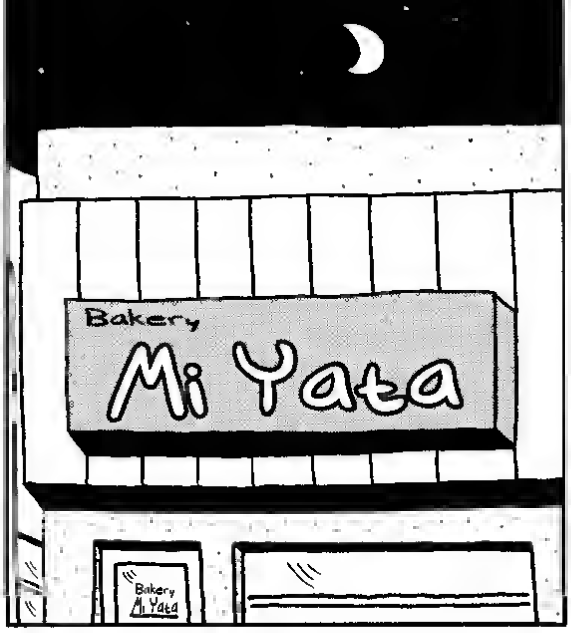

(18)
...
SIWAAA
(42)
...

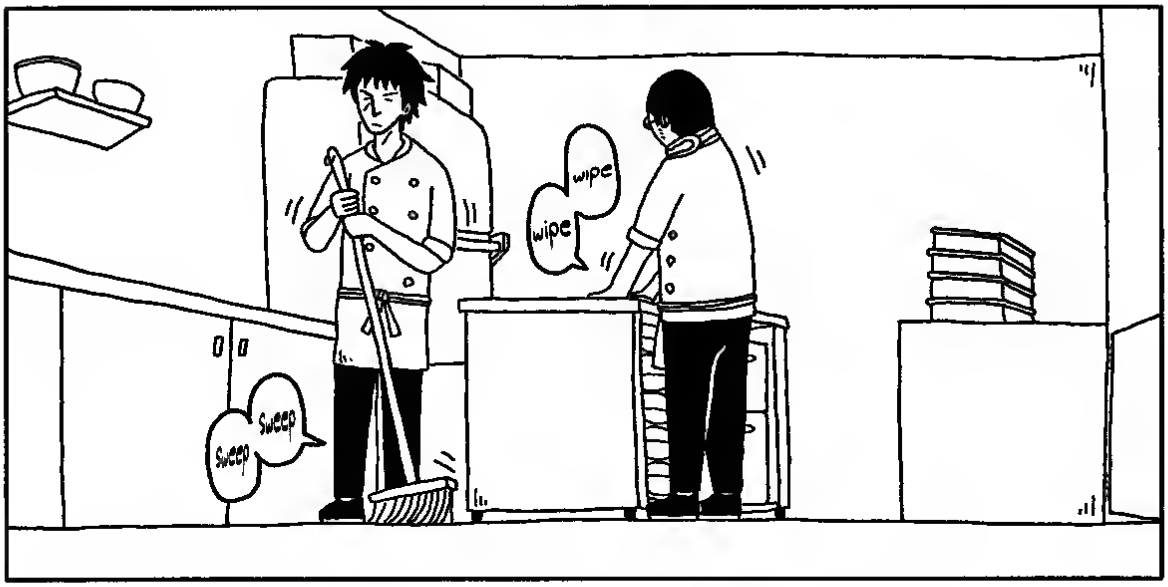

...IT'S OKAY. JUST LEAVE THEM IN THE BATHROOM.

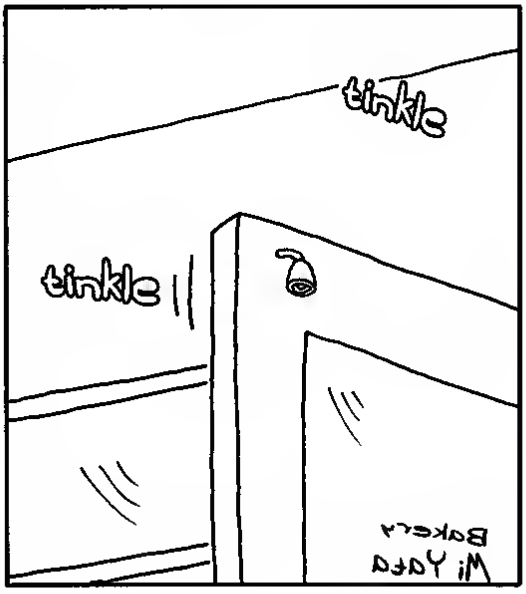

I'LL WASH THEM FOR YOU.
SORRY ...
SIWAAA

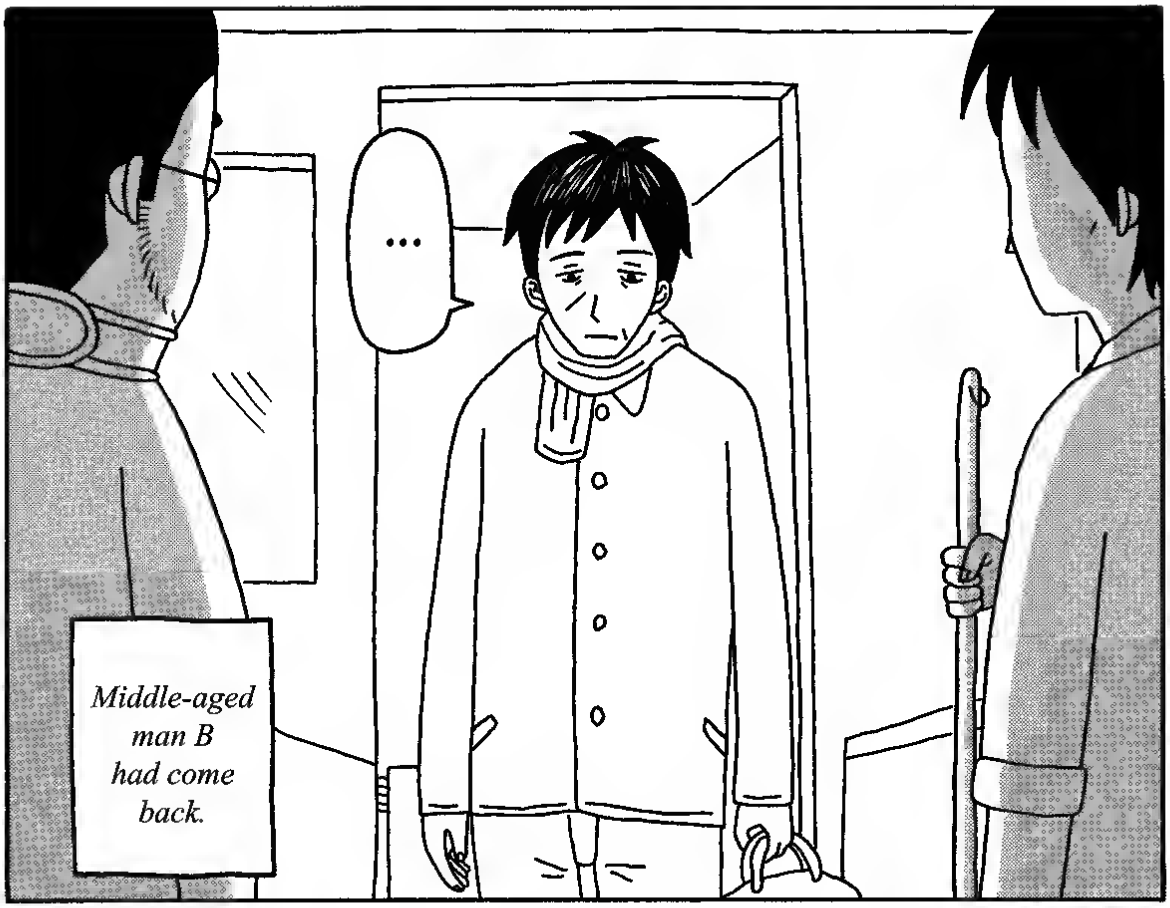
I POOPED MY PANTS ...
Unconsciously...
I'M SORRY, SUZUKO ...
SIWAAA
The man was totally exhausted.


Bakery
Mi Yata
Sorry, we're CLOSED
Please come again


Bakery
Mi Yata
Bakery
Mi Yata

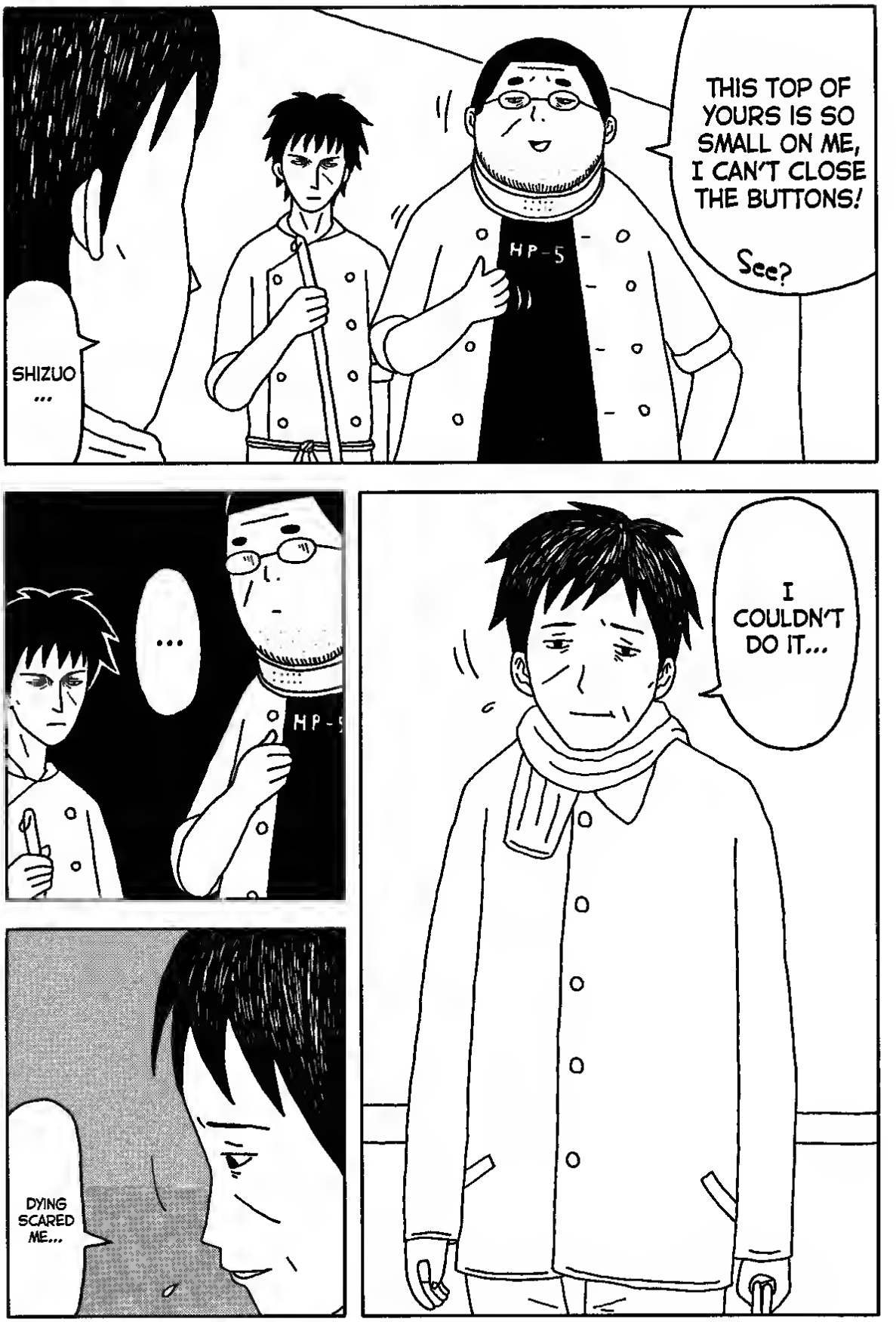

wipe
wipe
sweep
sweep


tinkle
tinkle


...
Middle-aged man B had come back.

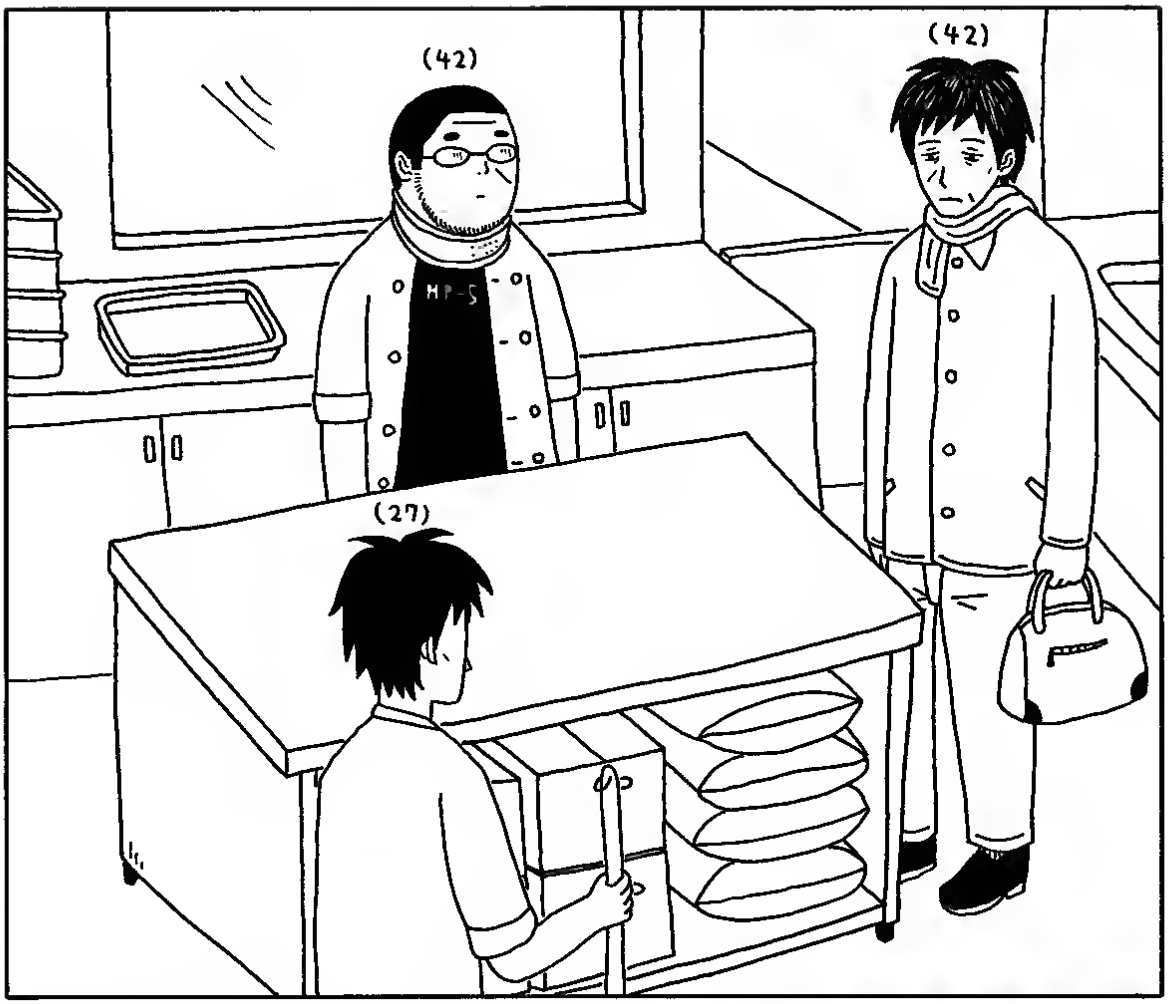
OSAMU-SAN...
...
HP-5

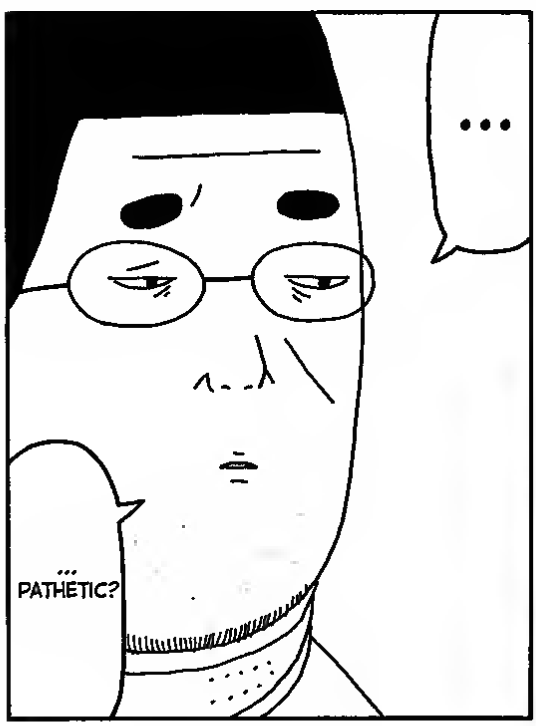
MIYATA ...


THIS TOP OF YOURS IS SO SMALL ON ME, I CAN'T CLOSE THE BUTTONS!
See?
HP-5
SHIZUO ...
...
I COULDN'T DO IT...
DYING SCARED ME...

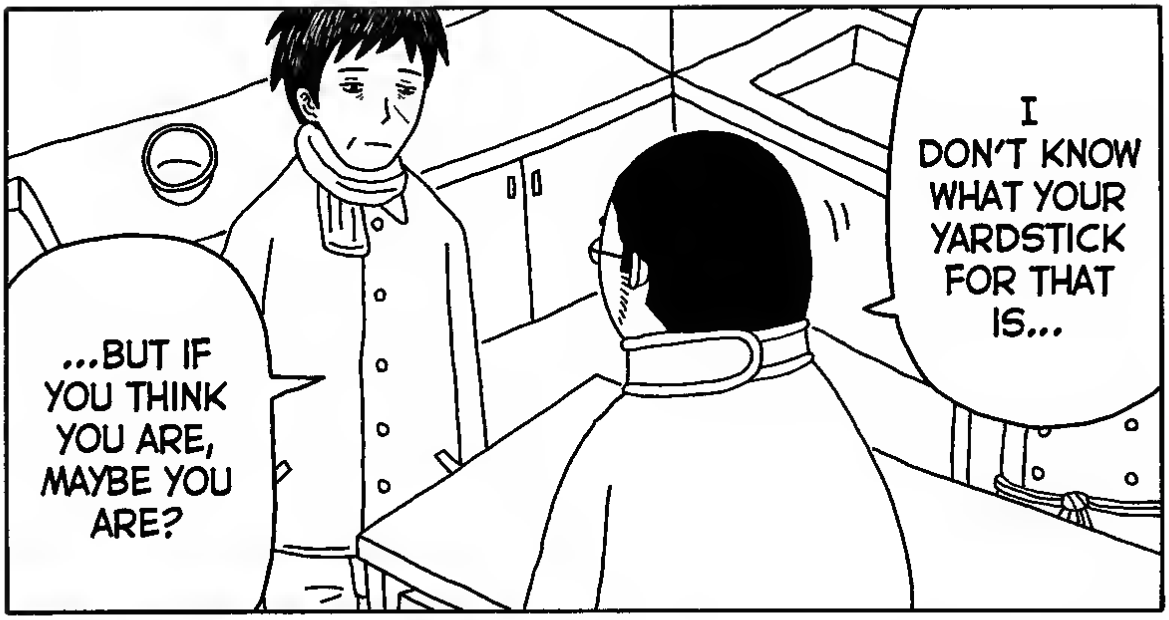
kreek
kreek
...
...
kreek
grab
thrash
thrash

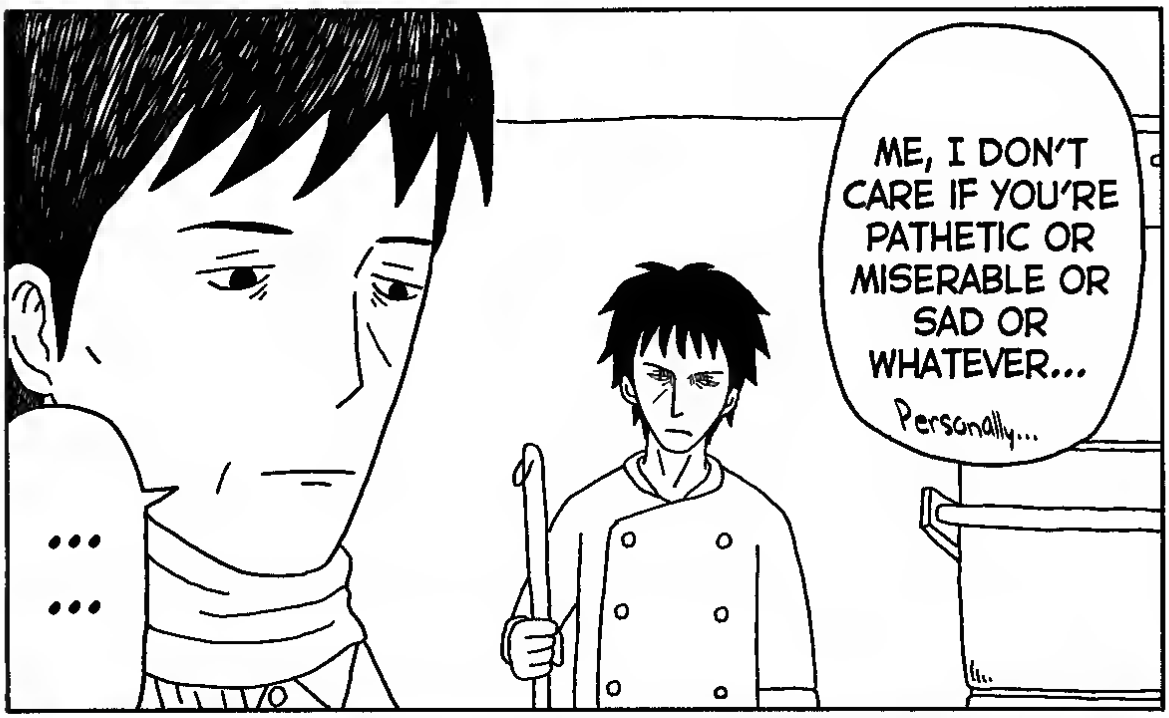
F
w
o
k
hanh
hanh
hanh
...
...
Man B couldn't go through with his suicide…

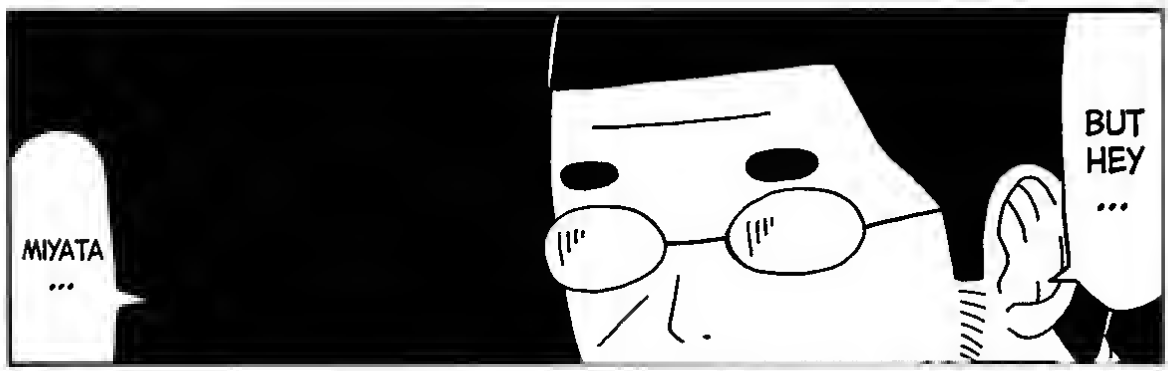

(42)
(42)
MP-5
(27)

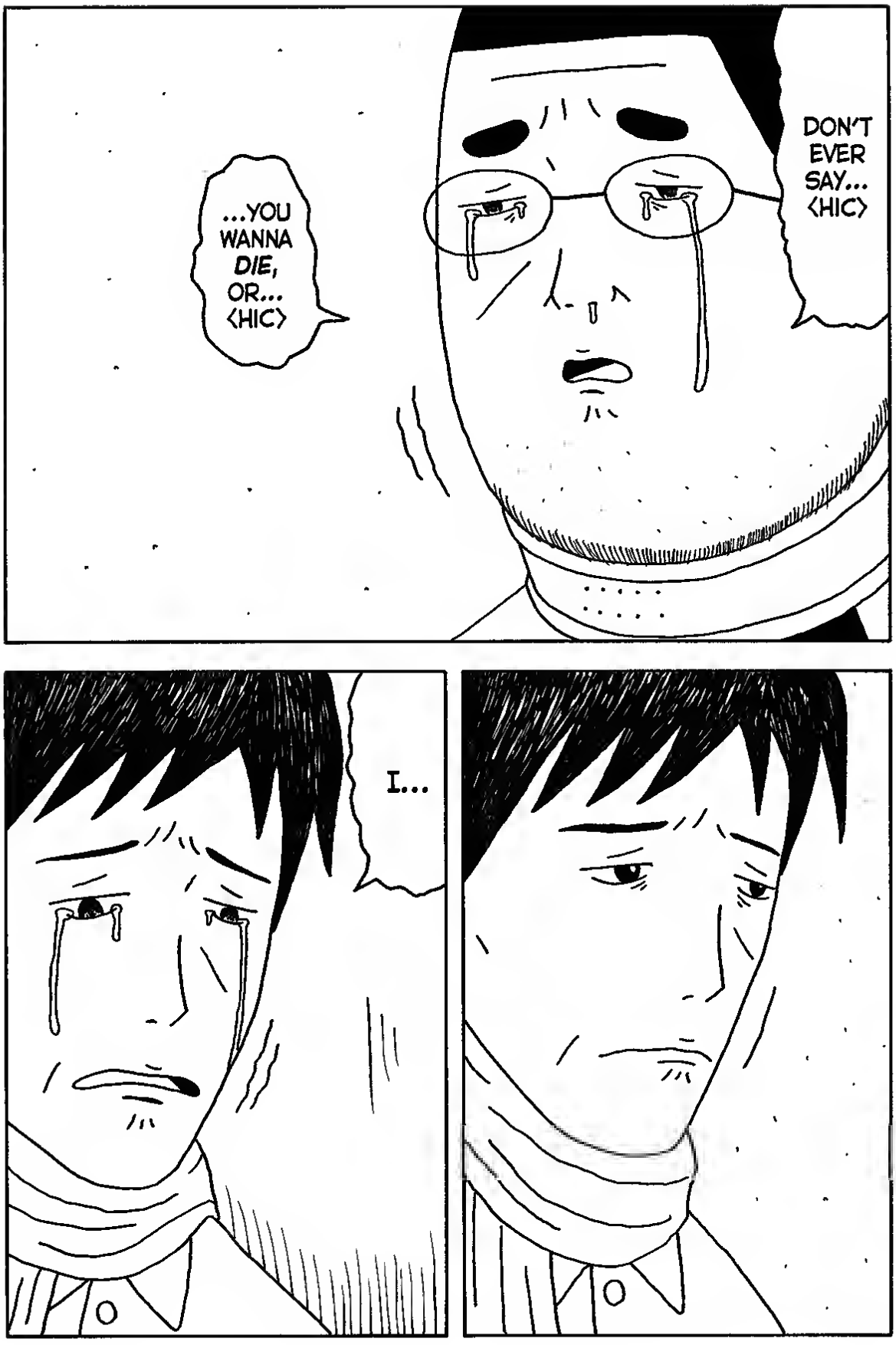

...
...PATHETIC?

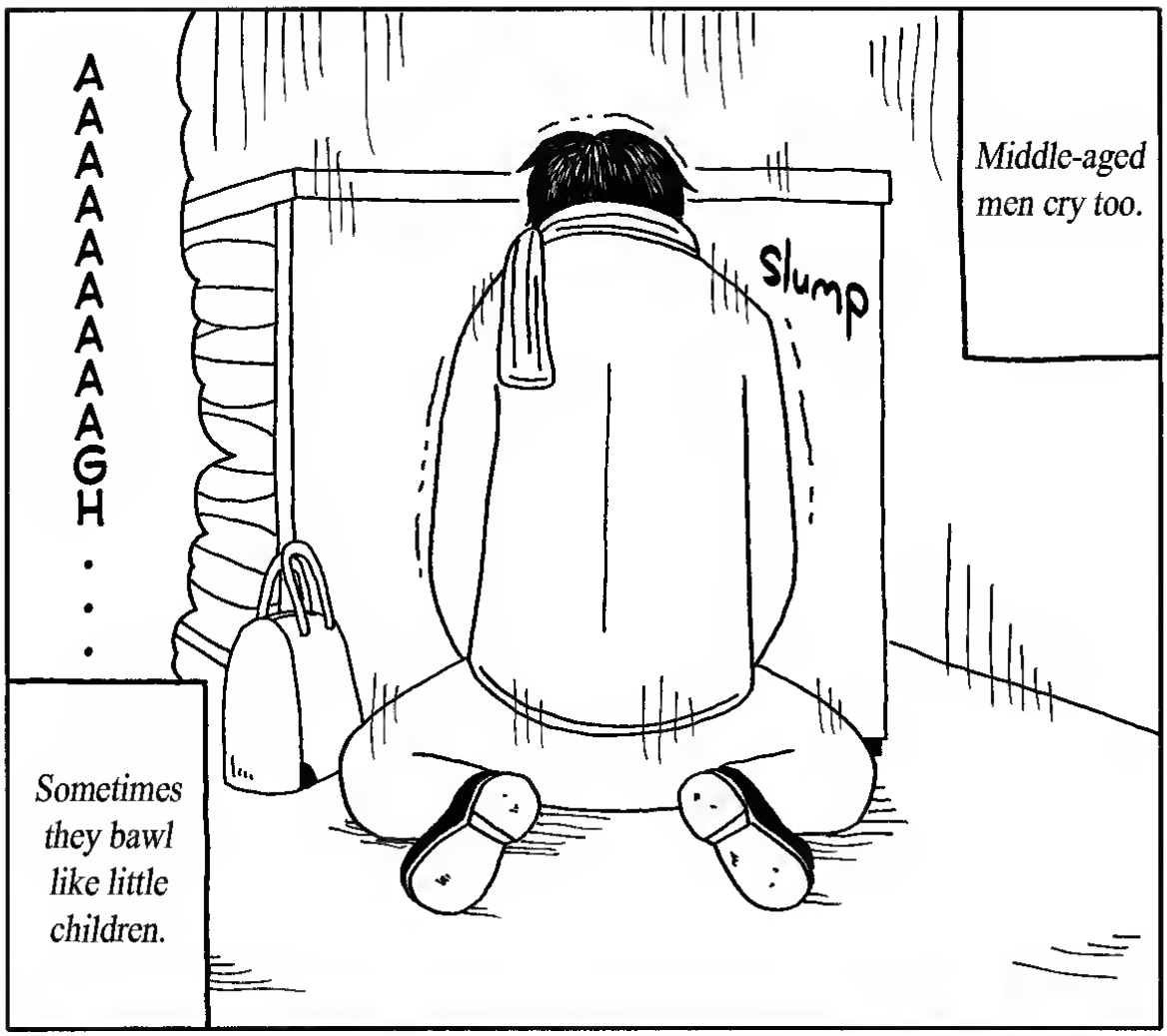
PRETTY PATHETIC, AREN'T I...?
Ha ha!

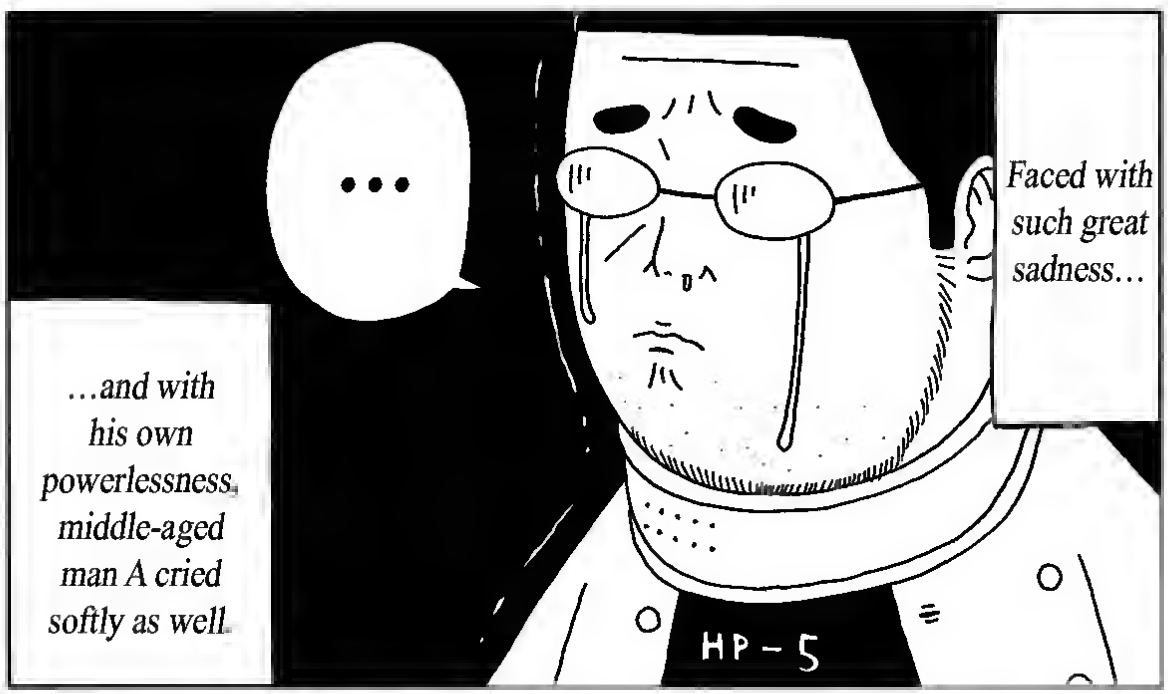

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR YARDSTICK FOR THAT IS...
...BUT IF YOU THINK YOU ARE, MAYBE YOU ARE?

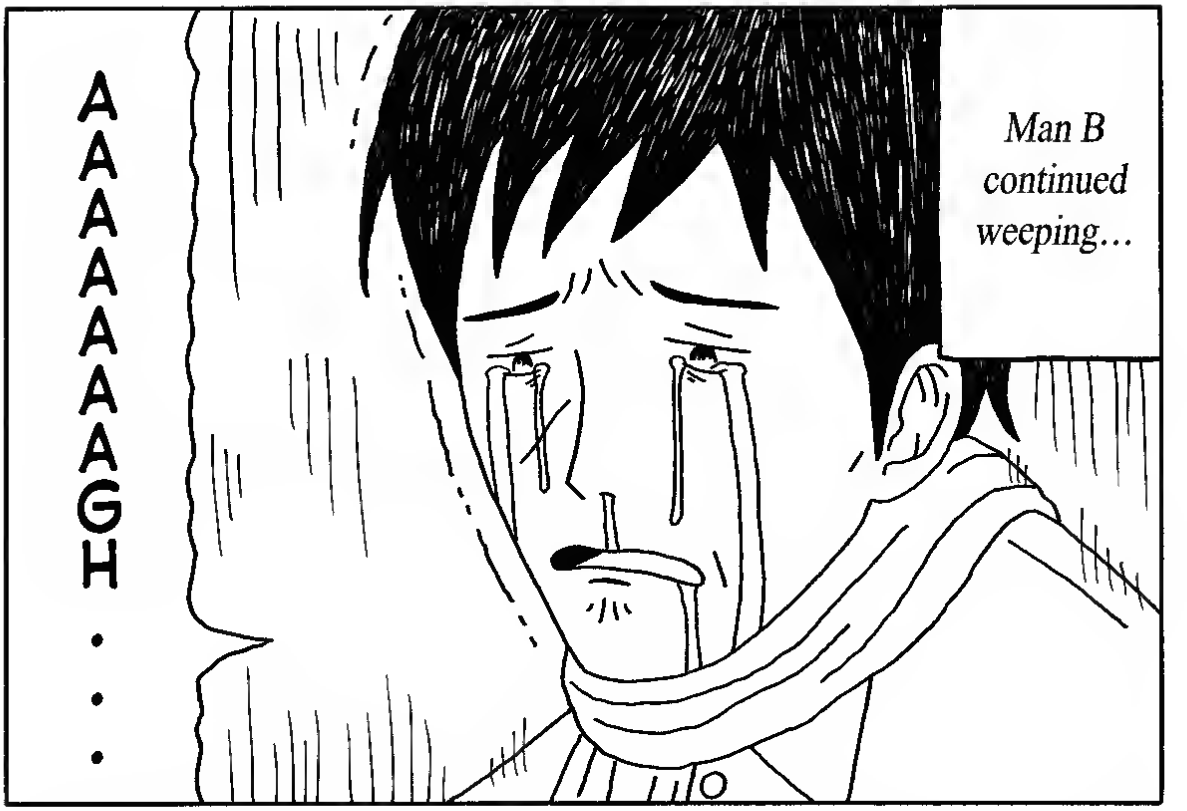

ME, I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE PATHETIC OR MISERABLE OR SAD OR WHATEVER...
Personally...
...
...

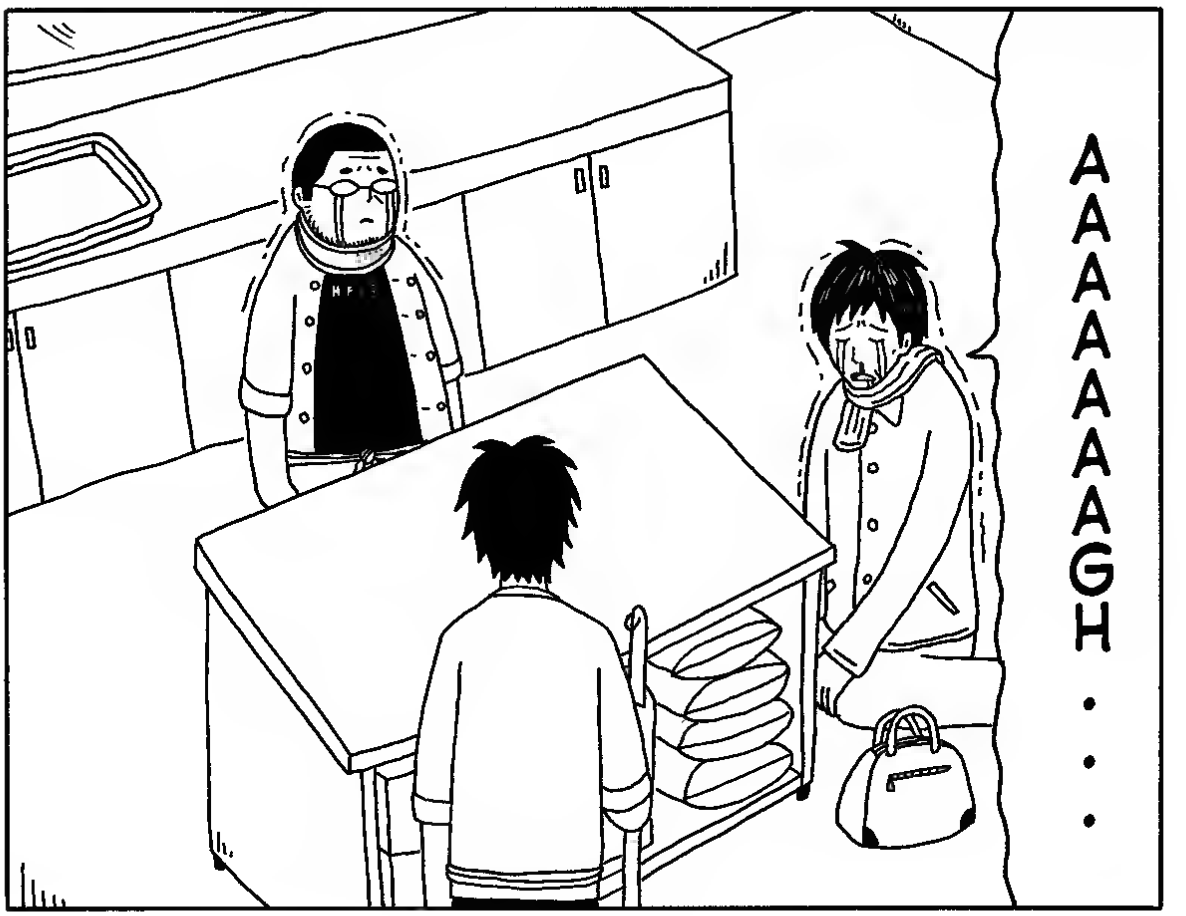

BUT HEY ...
MIYATA ...

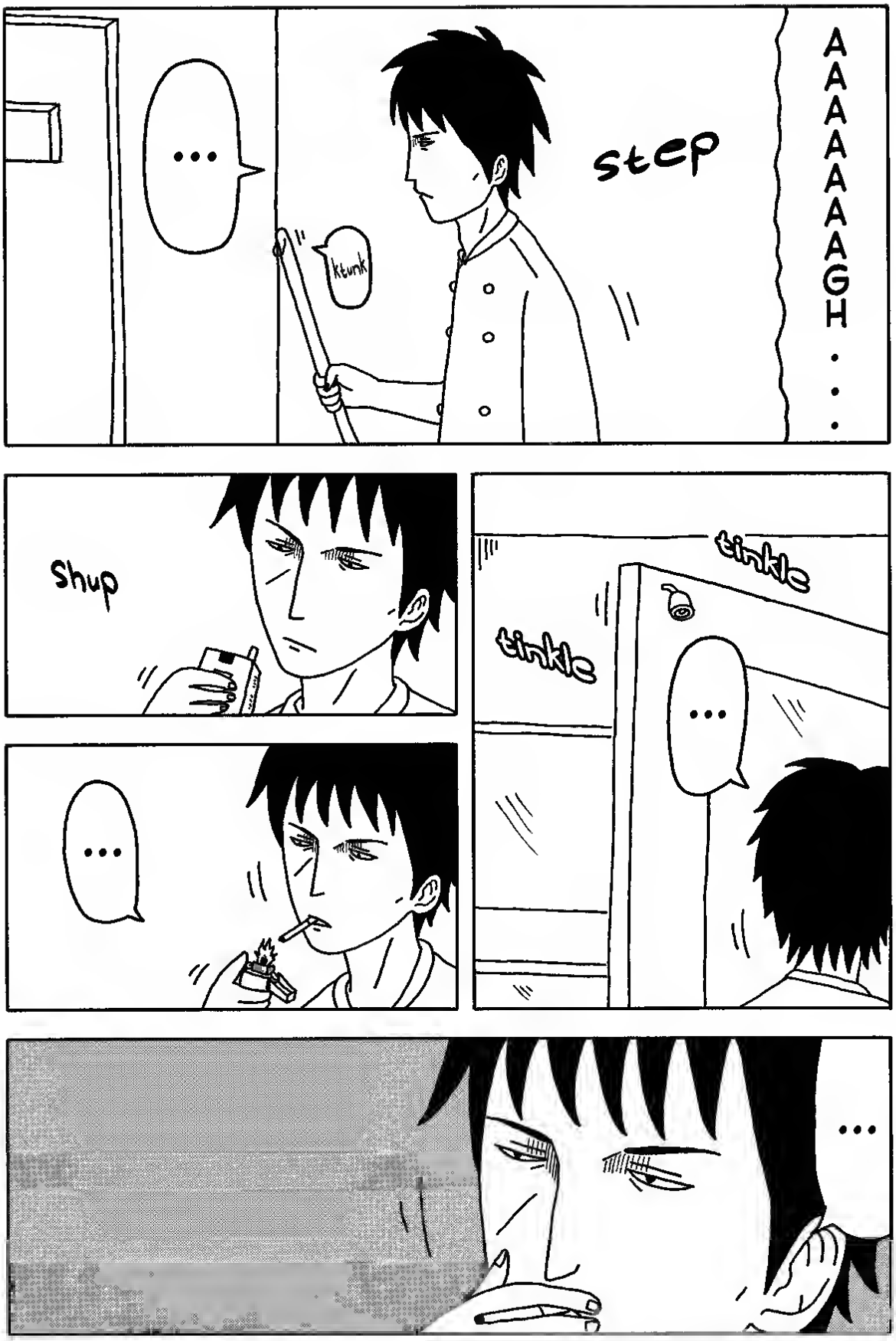

...YOU WANNA *DIE*, OR... <HIC>
DON'T EVER SAY... <HIC>
I...

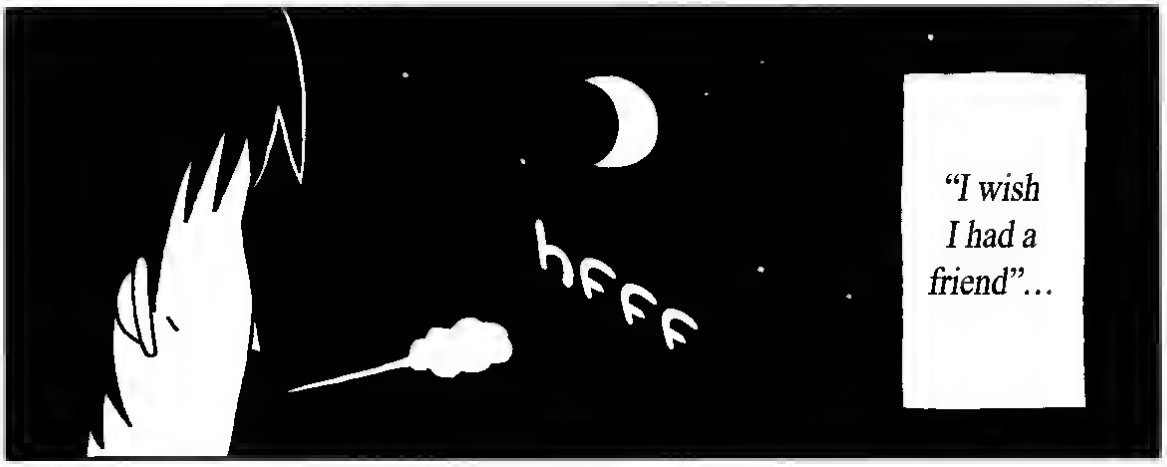

AAAAAAAAAGH....
Slump
Middle-aged men cry too.
Sometimes they bawl like little children.

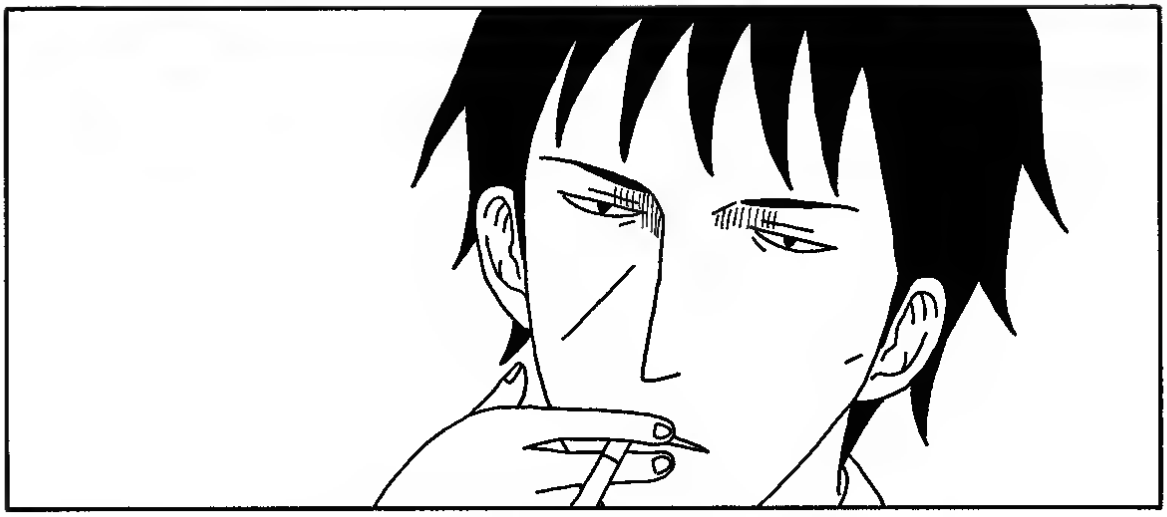

...
HP-5
Faced with such great sadness...
...and with his own powerlessness, middle-aged man A cried softly as well.

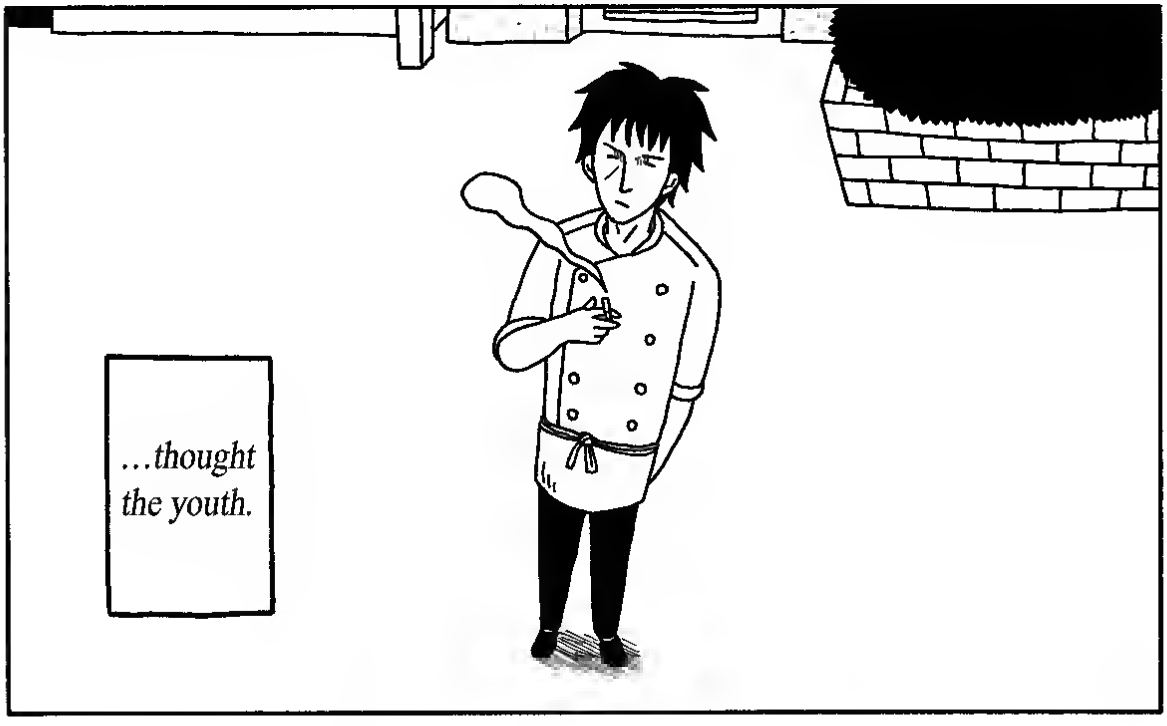

AAAAAAGH...
Man B continued weeping...


AAAAAAGH...


...
ktunk
step
AAAAAAAGH...
shup
tinkle
tinkle
...
...


hffff
"I wish I had a friend"…



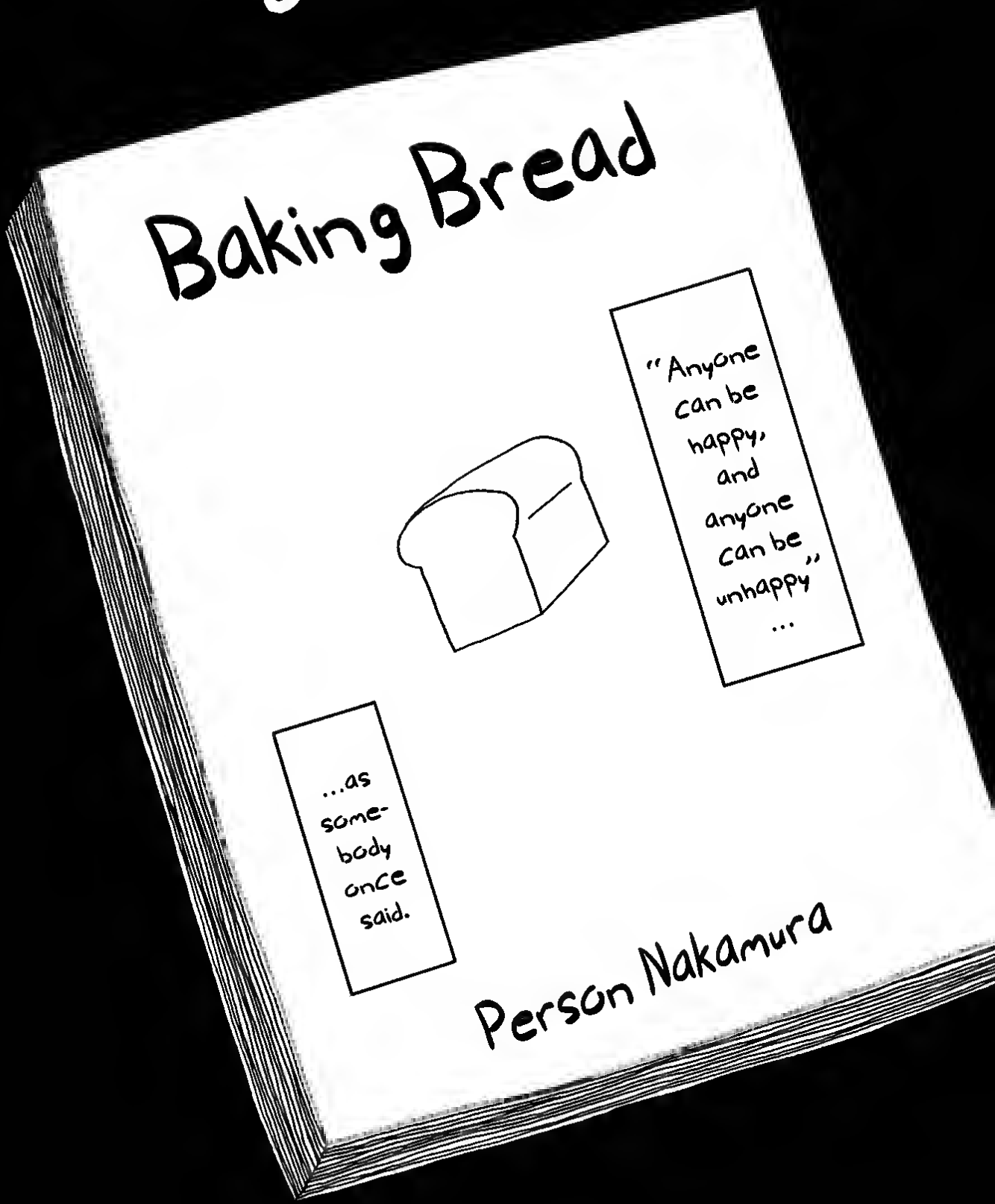

…thought the youth.

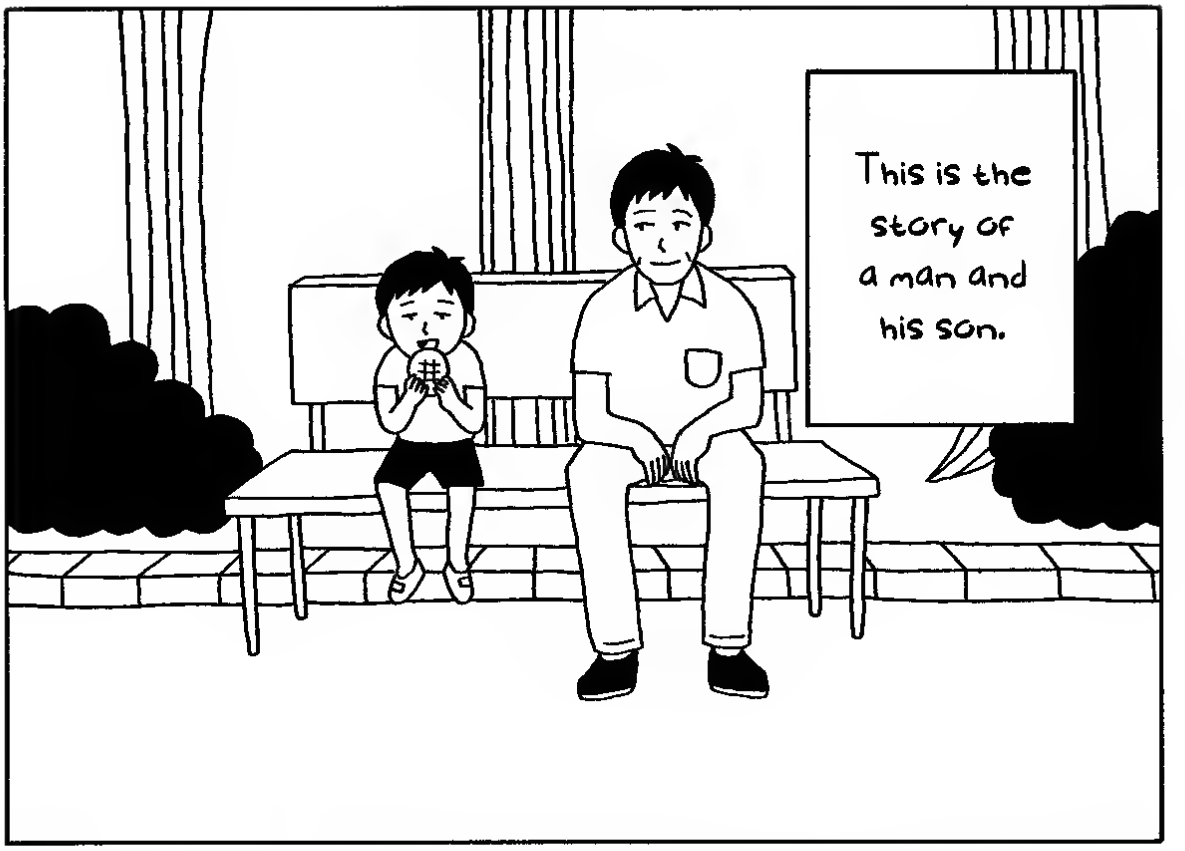
I'm through with baking bread...

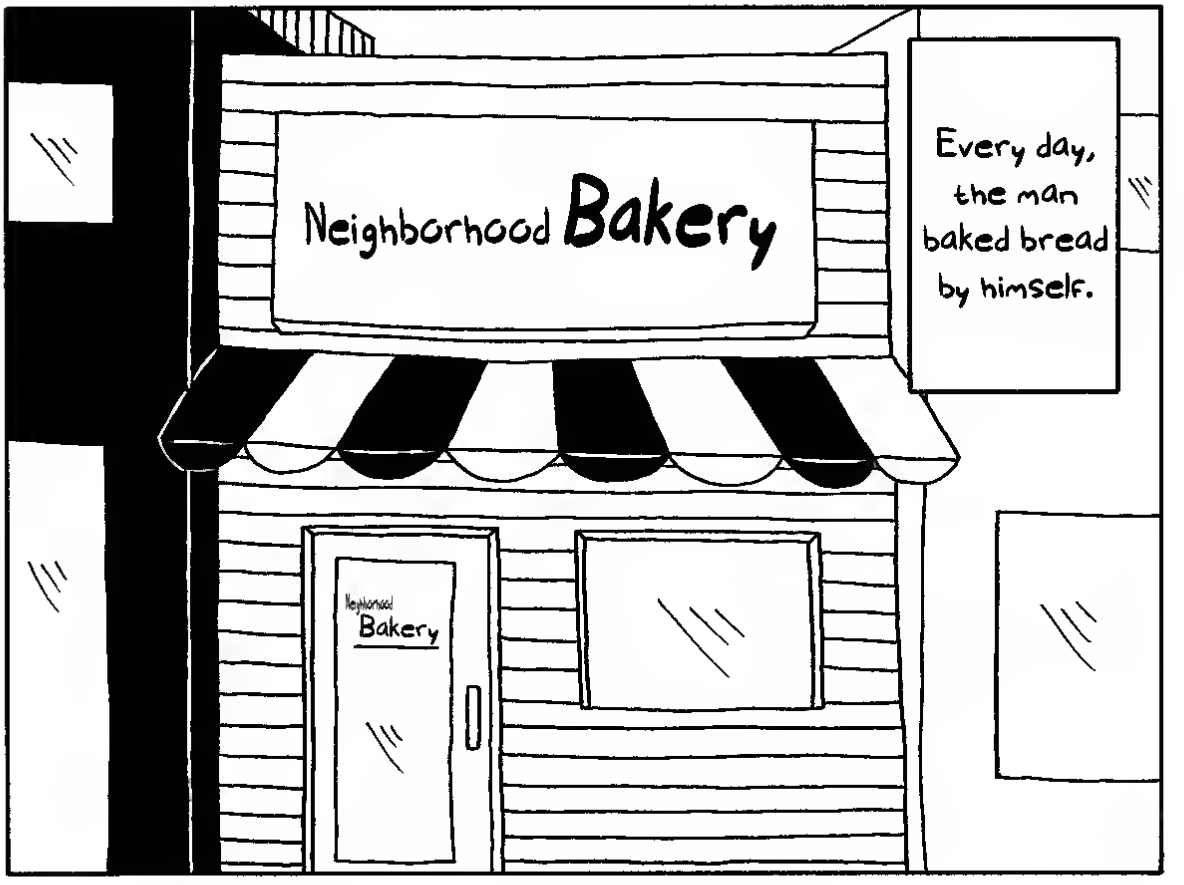
Okay...

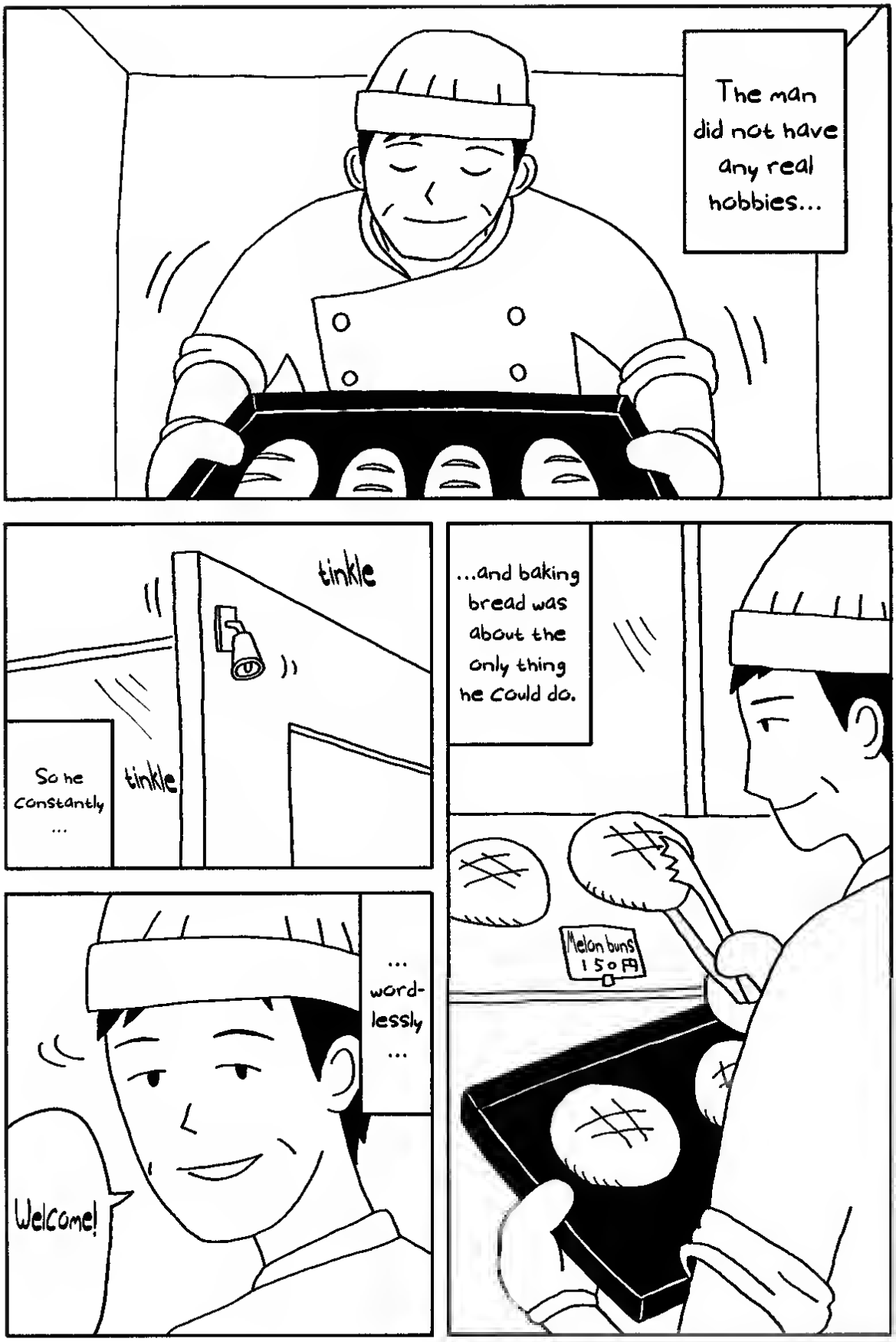
Chapter 26:

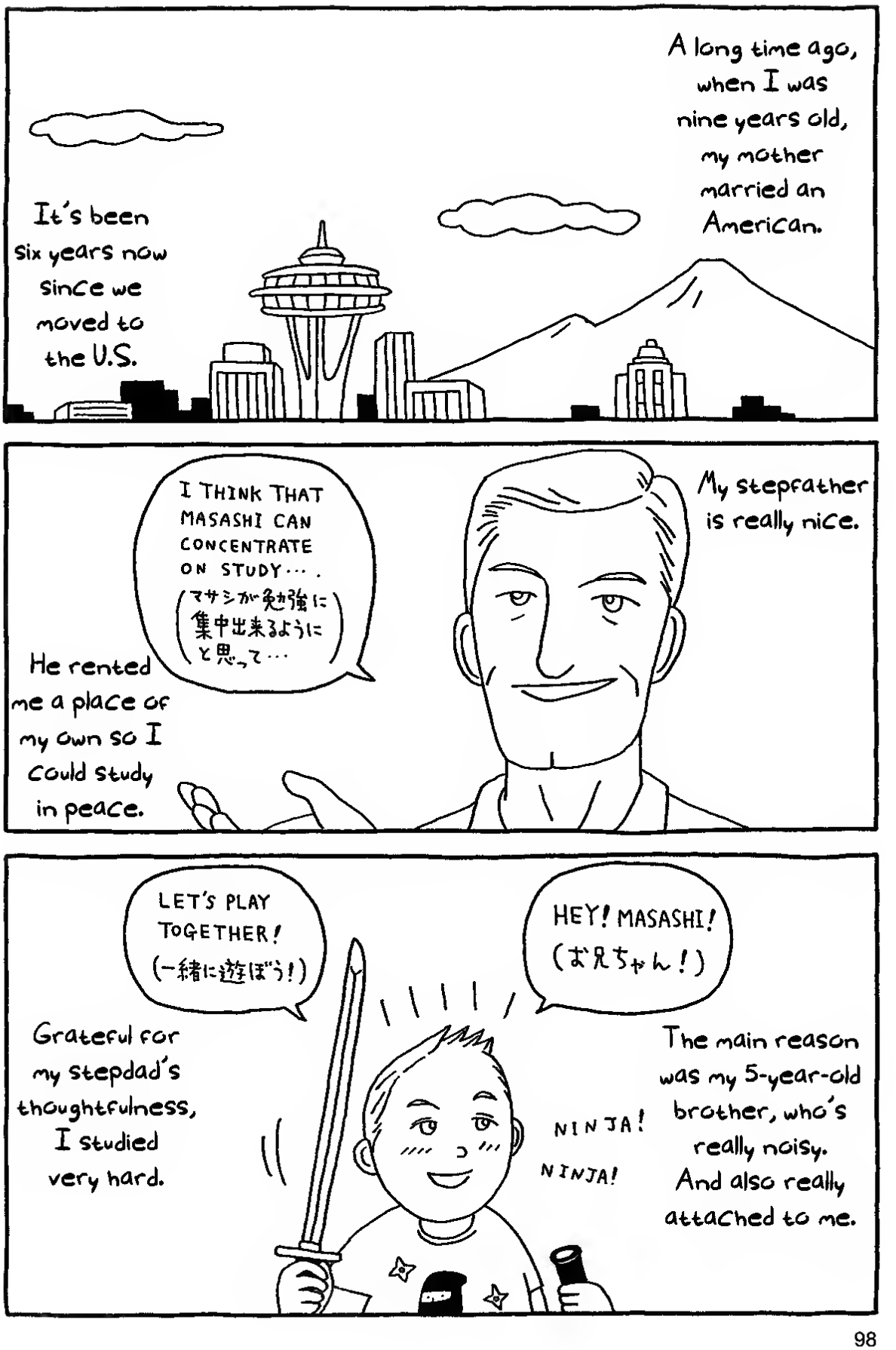
Baking Bread



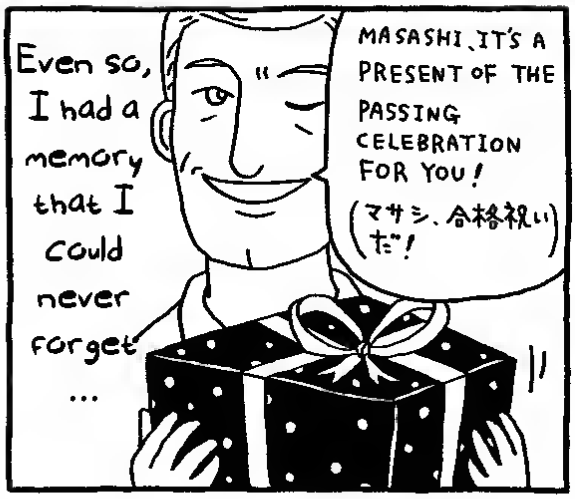

This is the story of a man and his son.

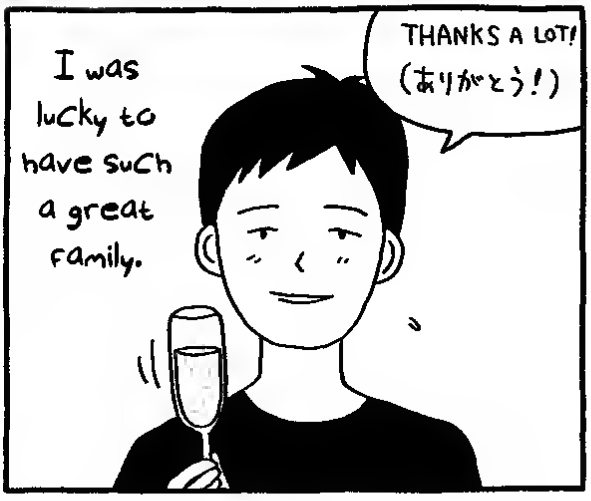

Neighborhood Bakery
Every day, the man baked bread by himself.
Neighborhood Bakery


The man did not have any real hobbies...
tinkle
tinkle
So he constantly ...
...and baking bread was about the only thing he could do.
Melon buns 150円
... word-lessly ...
Welcome!


A long time ago, when I was nine years old, my mother married an American.
It's been six years now since we moved to the U.S.
My stepfather is really nice.
I THINK THAT MASASHI CAN CONCENTRATE ON STUDY… .
(マサシが勉強に集中出来るようにと思って…
He rented me a place of my own so I could study in peace.
HEY! MASASHI! (お兄ちゃん!)
LET'S PLAY TOGETHER! (一緒に遊ぼう!)
NINJA!
NINJA!
Grateful for my stepdad's thoughtfulness, I studied very hard.
The main reason was my 5-year-old brother, who's really noisy. And also really attached to me.

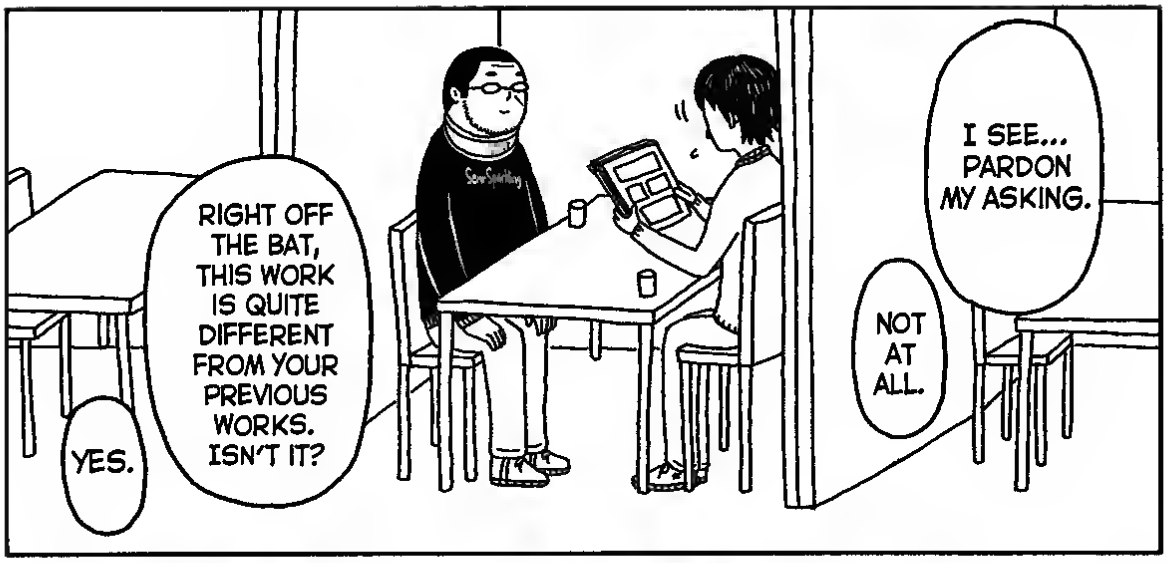
My mom and stepdad and little brother celebrated with me.
NINJA!
MASASHI. CONGRATULATIONS! (マサシ、おめでとう!)
As a result, I passed all my exams with flying colors.

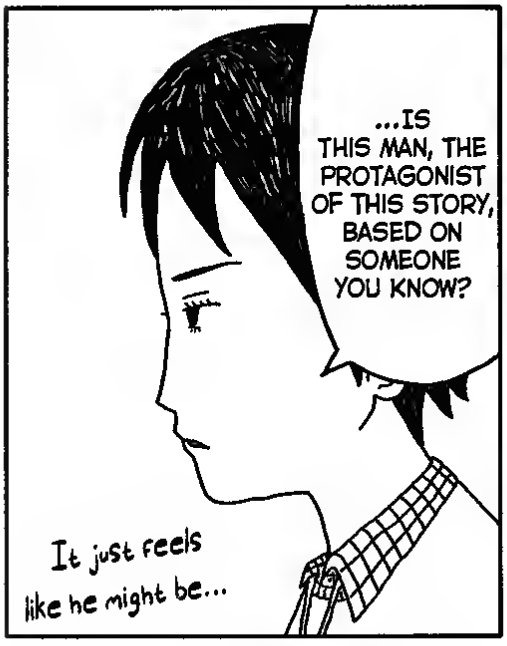

Even so, I had a memory that I could never forget ...
MASASHI, IT'S A PRESENT OF THE PASSING CELEBRATION FOR YOU! (マサシ、合格祝いだ!)


I was lucky to have such a great family.
THANKS A LOT! (ありがとう!)

THANKS A LOT! (ありがとう!)
...who'd started a bakery in Japan, just before I left for America.
And that was the memory of my real father...

...
OGURO
-SAN.
Semi-Sparkling
YES.
I couldn't help wondering...
...YOU CAN SPEAK ENGLISH?
I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, I'M SORRY...
MY DAUGHTER HELPED ME WITH THAT.
OKAY.
I CAN'T SPEAK A WORD OF ENGLISH.


RIGHT OFF THE BAT, THIS WORK IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR PREVIOUS WORKS. ISN'T IT?
YES.
I SEE... PARDON MY ASKING.
NOT AT ALL.


...IS THIS MAN, THE PROTAGONIST OF THIS STORY, BASED ON SOMEONE YOU KNOW?
It just feels like he might be...

WHAT IF, FOR YOUR NEXT WORK, YOU AP-PROACHED IT LIKE YOU WERE WRITING A LETTER?
I LISTENED TO YOUR ADVICE, UNAMI-SAN, AND CHANGED MY STYLE. AT LEAST, I THINK I DID.
THANK YOU.
EKKE
Unami

YES.
A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE.

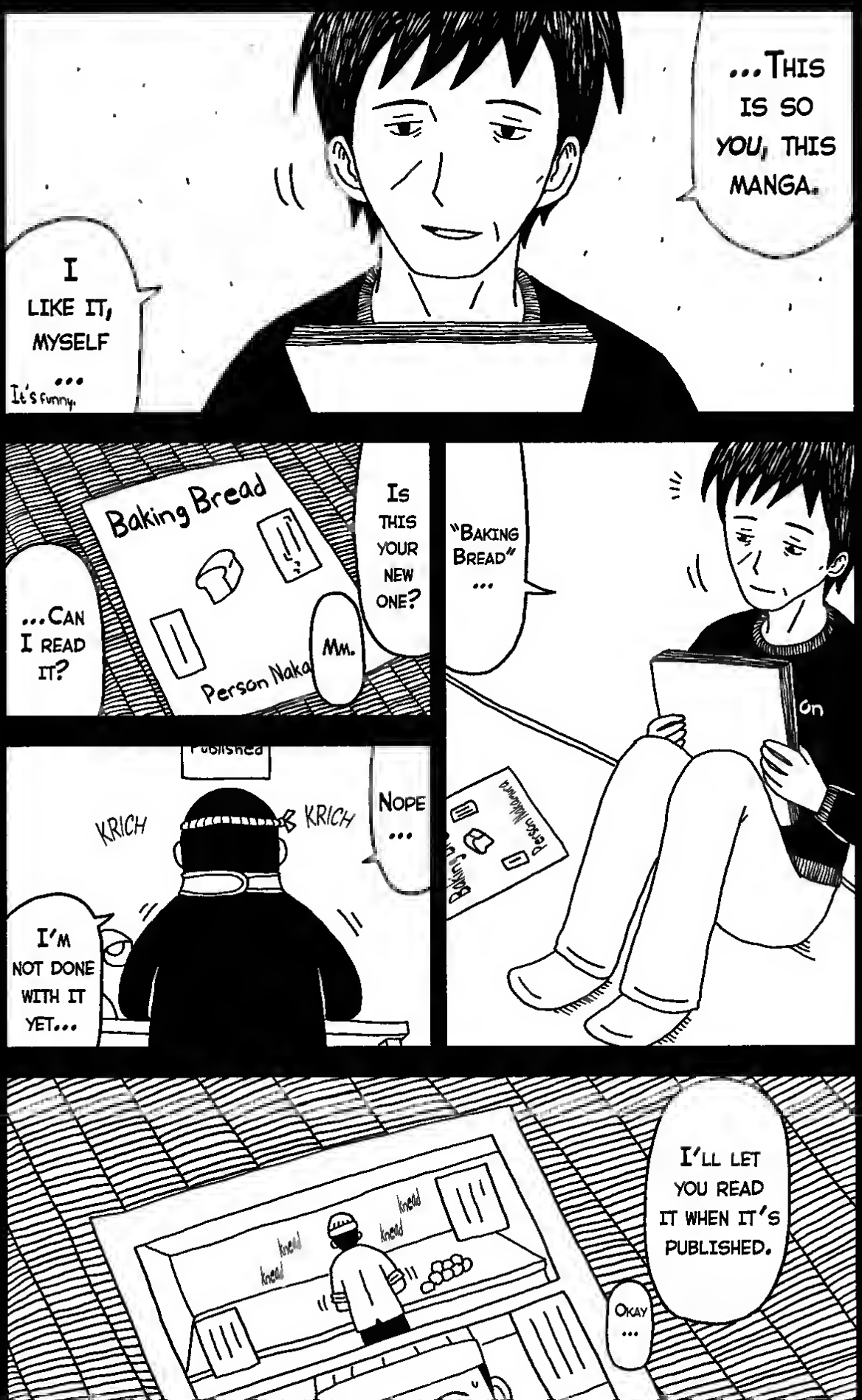
...Thank you for letting me stay here for the time being.
dip
I really appreciate it.
And sorry for the trouble, really.
Swirl
Swirl
Organic

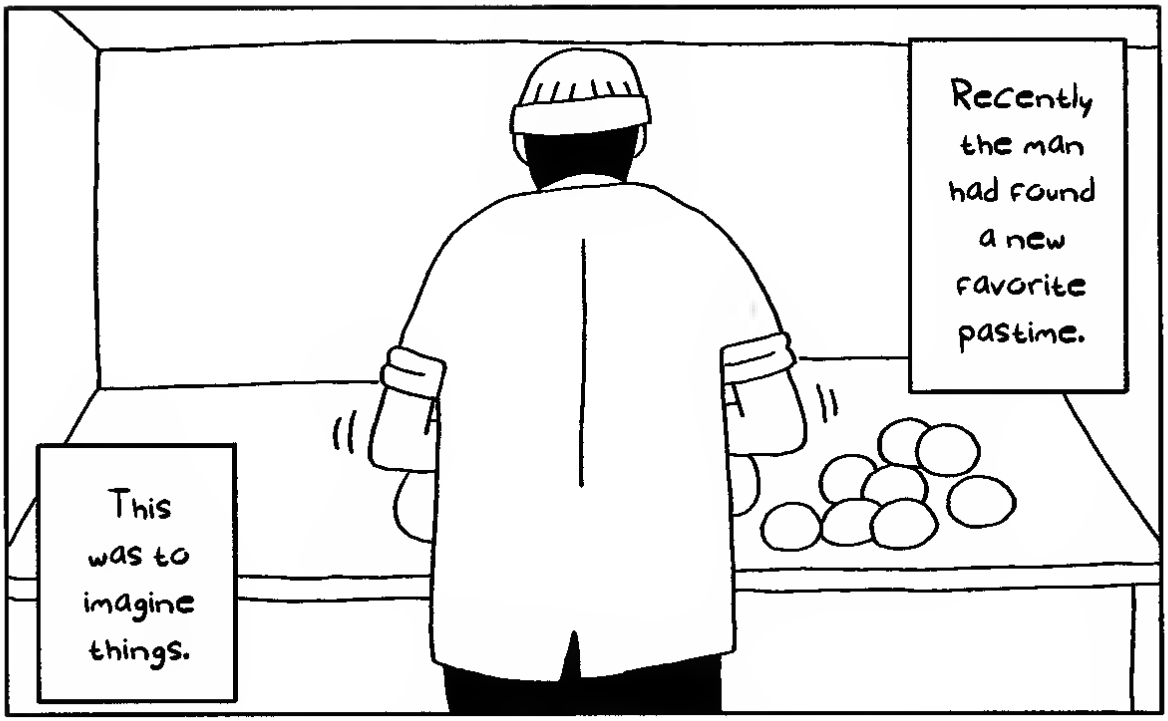
Miyata-kun... It's really no big deal. Stay as long as you like.
Take it easy, at least until you're back on your feet. Physically and mentally.
It's okay for grown-ups to lean on someone, you know.
Thank you.
You can learn a lot in *that* regard from my idiot son.
Idiot son...? That's insulting...
Organic
And quit drinking wine in the middle of the day, fer pete's sake!
...
Dad ...
Soldiers need their rest.
You're no soldier!
You don't lean, you *mooch*, you no-good bum!
glug glug
...

Stare
...
Oguro Union
A
Swirl
Swirl
Organic
Well, anyway... Let's raise our glasses to Miyata's fresh start.
That's okay, then...
!!!
...You got a problem? With my clothes...
No... Not really...
Oguro Union
Clink
Cheers!
Oguro Union

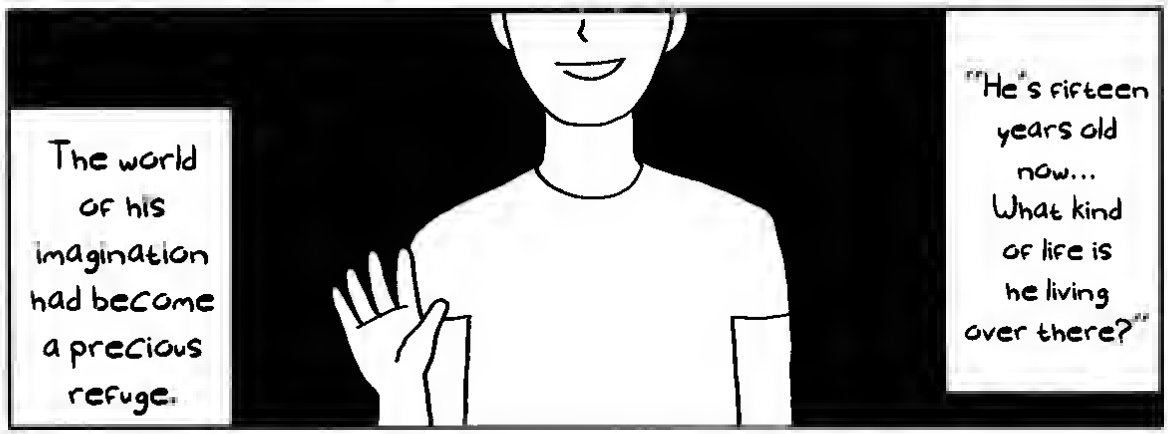
Get Published
Organic
OF COURSE I AM!
YOU REALLY ARE DRAWING MANGA...
Timesleep!
Shup
...
SHIZUO, THIS IS AMAZING! I CAN ACTUALLY READ IT!
It's a proper manga.
WHADDAYA MEAN, YOU CAN ACTUALLY READ IT?! Jeez...
HEH HEH HEH ...
flap
flap
flap
Union
...WHAT'RE YOU DOING, SHUICHI?
HUH?
Sir Lines
ARE YOU SPENDING THE NIGHT?
Organic
No ...
I THINK I'LL GO HOME.

dip
Oguro Union
...I look forward to working with you again, starting tomorrow.
And I'm really sorry about leaving you in the lurch like that...
Ichino-sawa-kun...
glug glug
Organic
Yeah?
dip
It's totally cool. Seriously.
I look forward to working with you, too.
...
flap flap
Union
...
KRICH KRICH
Organic
So... See you tomorrow, Osamu-san.
I better get going.
Yeah. Good night.


...This is so YOU, this manga.
I like it, myself... It's funny.
Baking Bread
Person Naka
Is this your new one?
Mm.
...Can I read it?
"Baking Bread"...
Person Nakamura
Baking Bread
on
KRICH
KRICH
Nope...
I'm not done with it yet...
knead
knead
knead
knead
I'll let you read it when it's published.
Okay...


Recently the man had found a new favorite pastime.
This was to imagine things.

He would imagine what his son might be doing, far away in another country.
Six years had already passed since he had last seen him.


"He's fifteen years old now... What kind of life is he living over there?"
The world of his imagination had become a precious refuge.

"Do you still love bread?"

"Is your stepfather nice to you?"

"Have you made any friends?"

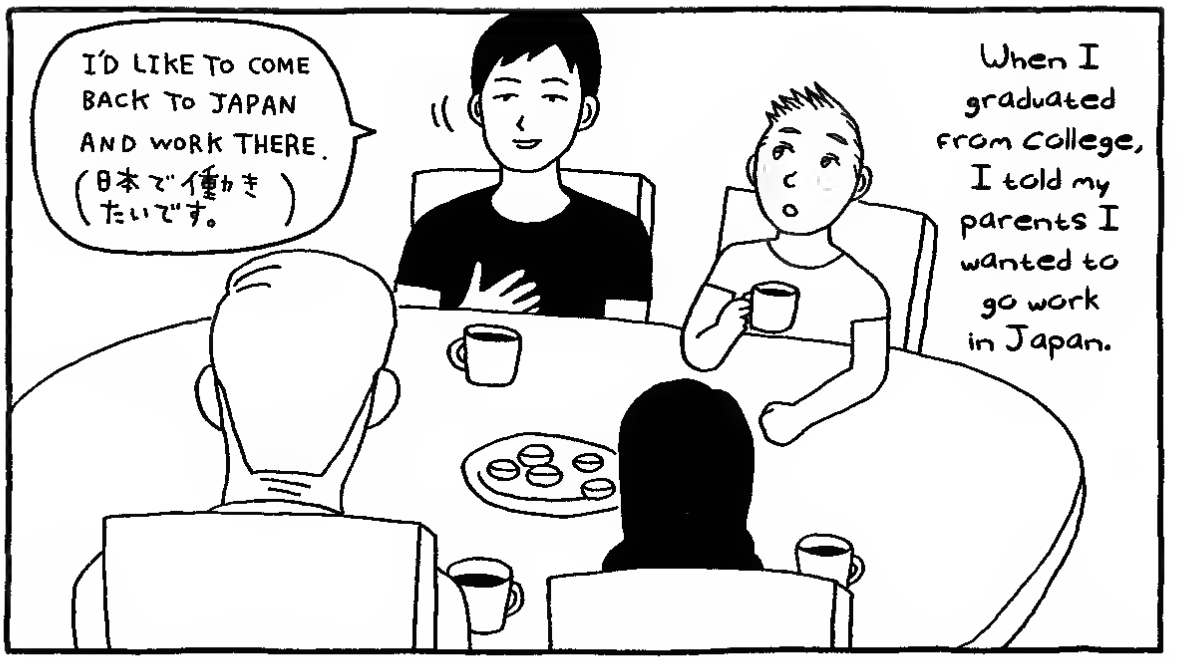
There were so many questions he wanted to ask his son.

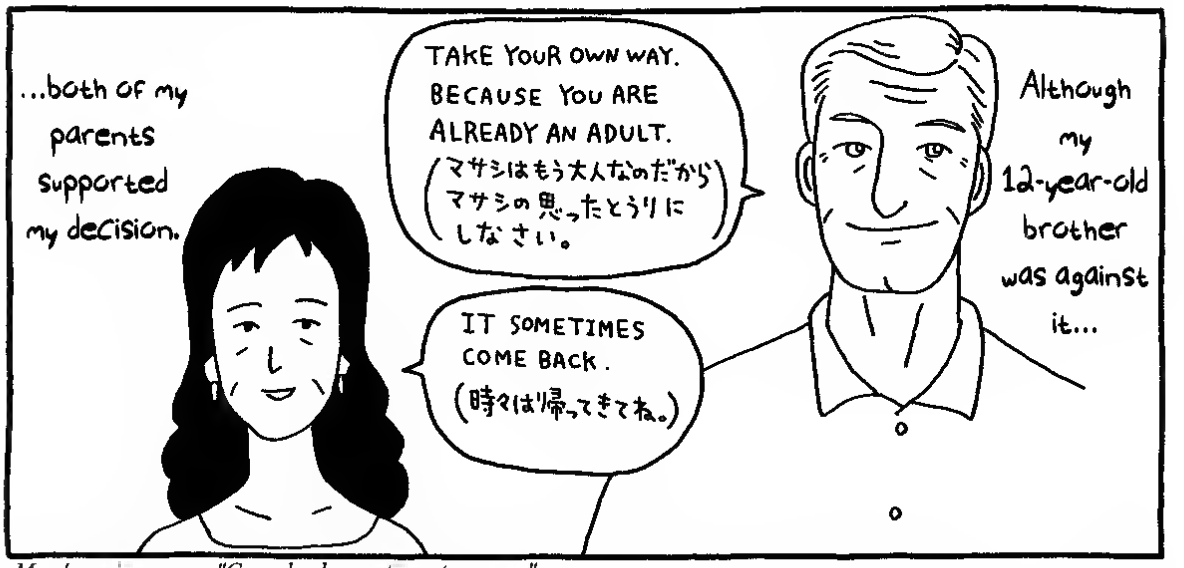
But in real life, he couldn't ask them.

Even so, imagining the answers was enough.

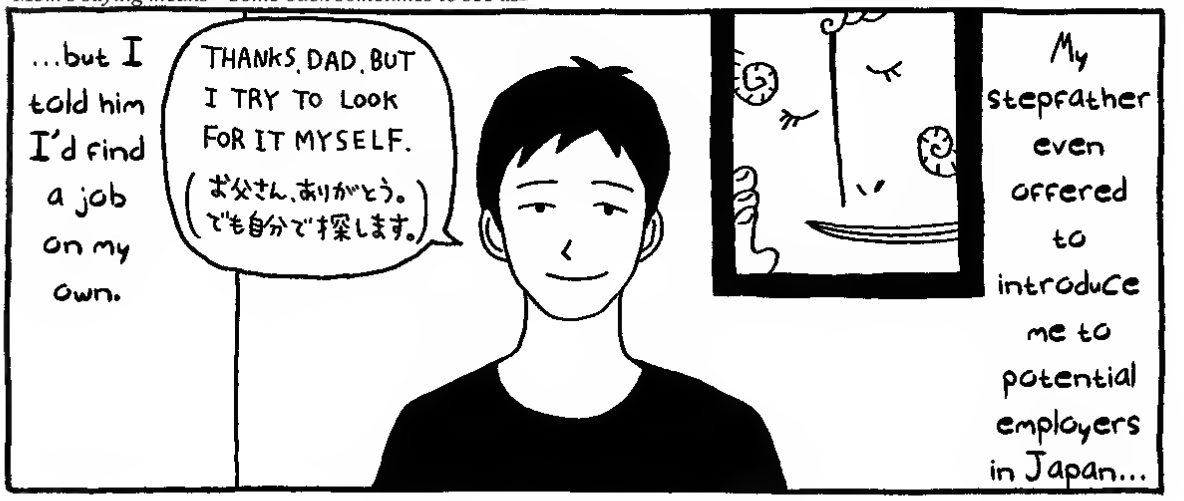
Thank you very much.

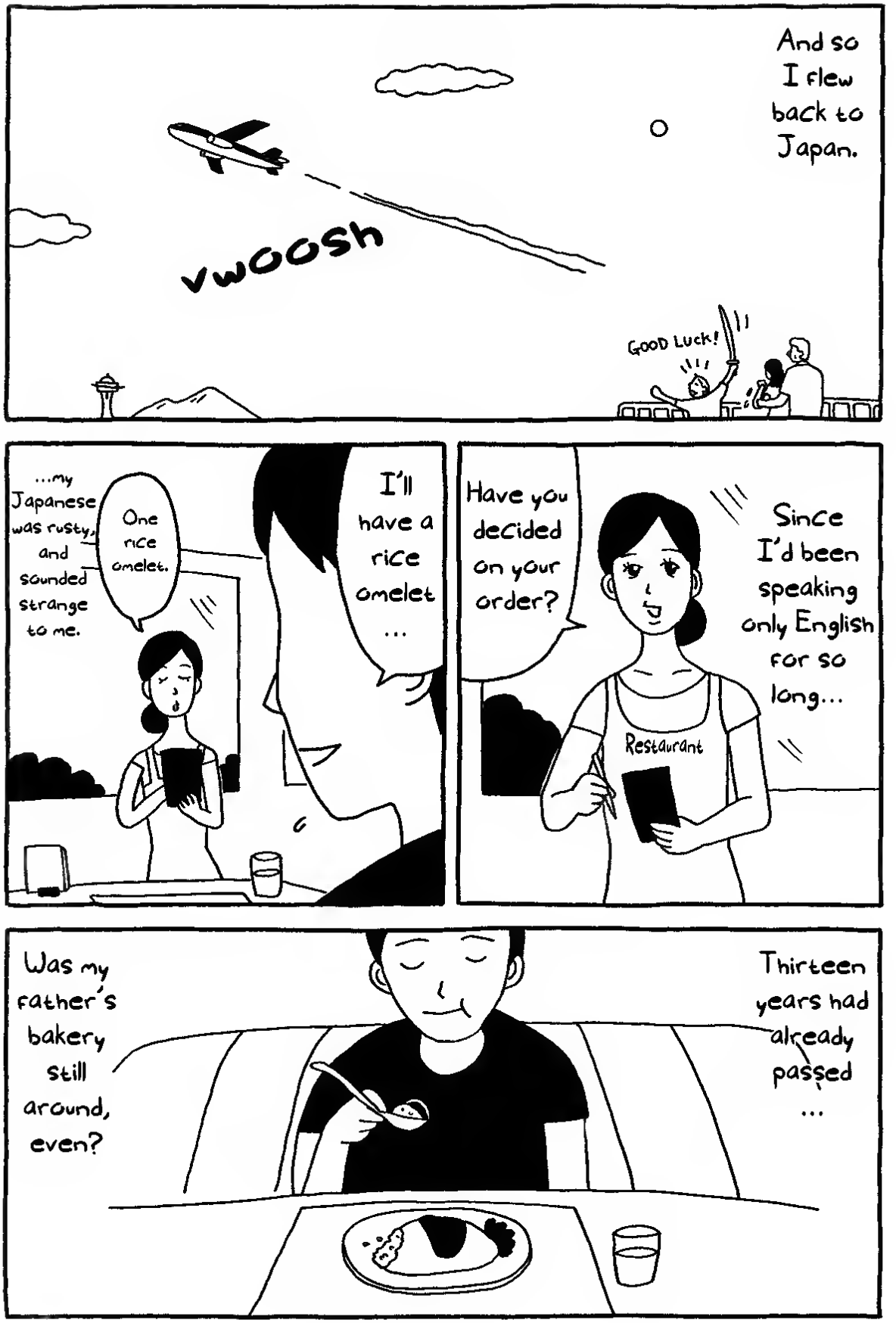
He believed that his son was living happily in his new home.

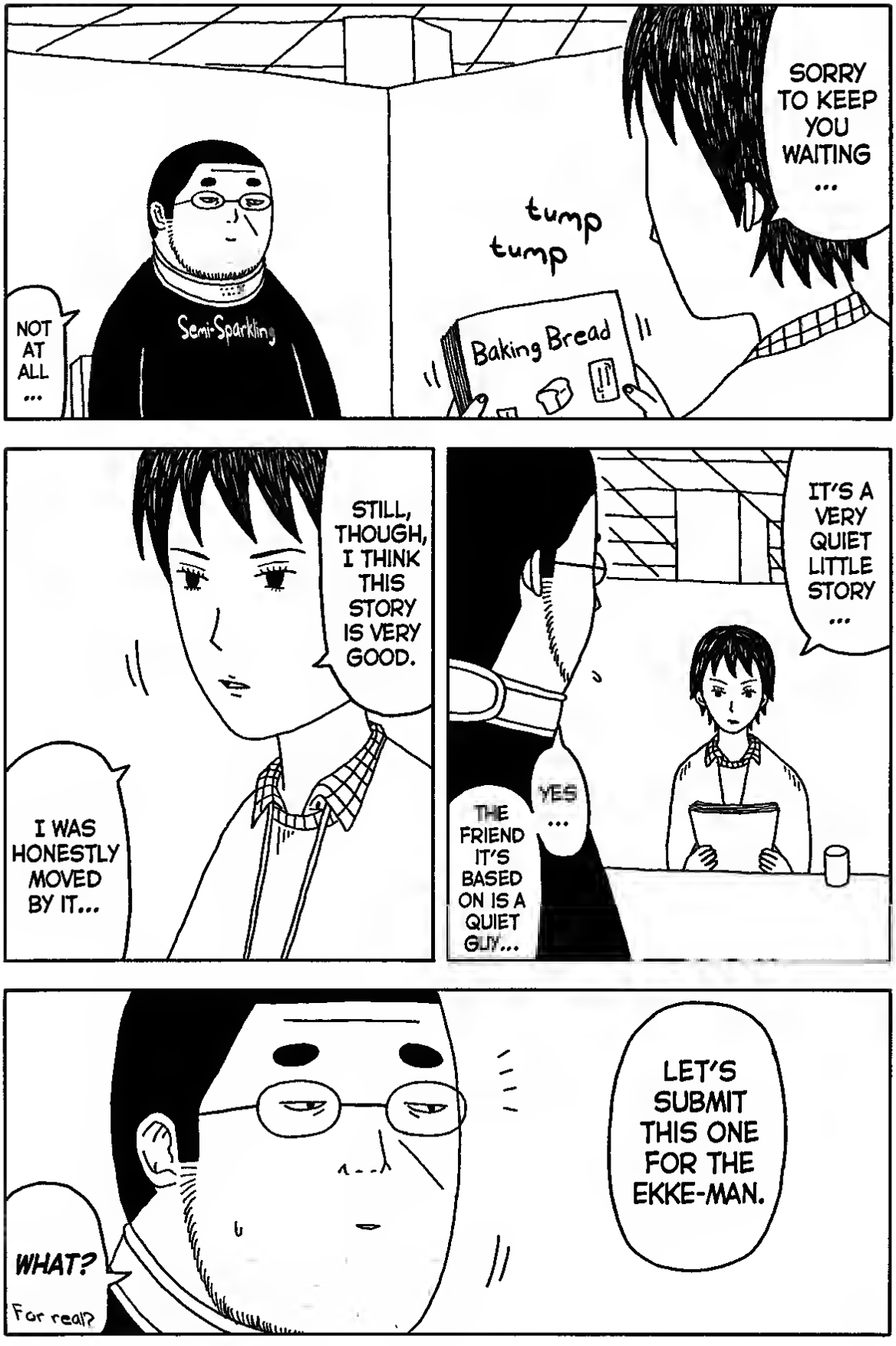

I'D LIKE TO COME BACK TO JAPAN AND WORK THERE.
(日本で働きたいです。)
When I graduated from college, I told my parents I wanted to go work in Japan.


...both of my parents supported my decision.
TAKE YOUR OWN WAY. BECAUSE YOU ARE ALREADY AN ADULT.
(マサシはもう大人なのだからマサシの思ったとうりにしなさい。)
IT SOMETIMES COME BACK.
(時々は帰ってきてね。)
Although my 12-year-old brother was against it...

Mom's saying means "Come back sometimes to see us."

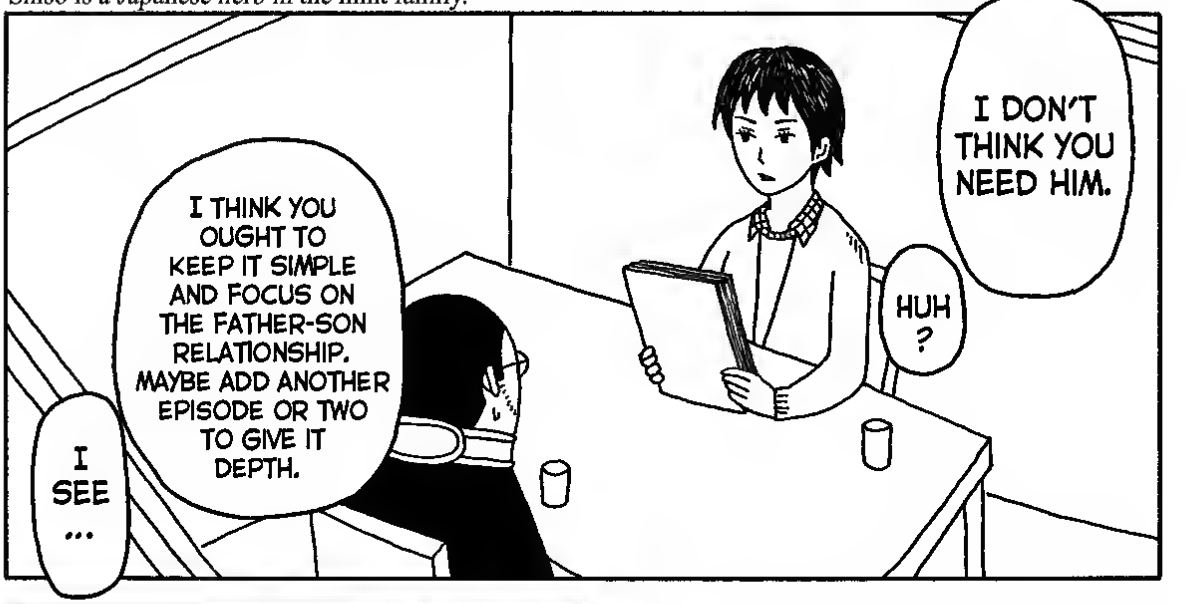

...but I told him I'd find a job on my own.
THANKS, DAD. BUT I TRY TO LOOK FOR IT MYSELF.
(お父さん、ありがとう。でも自分で探します。)
My stepfather even offered to introduce me to potential employers in Japan...

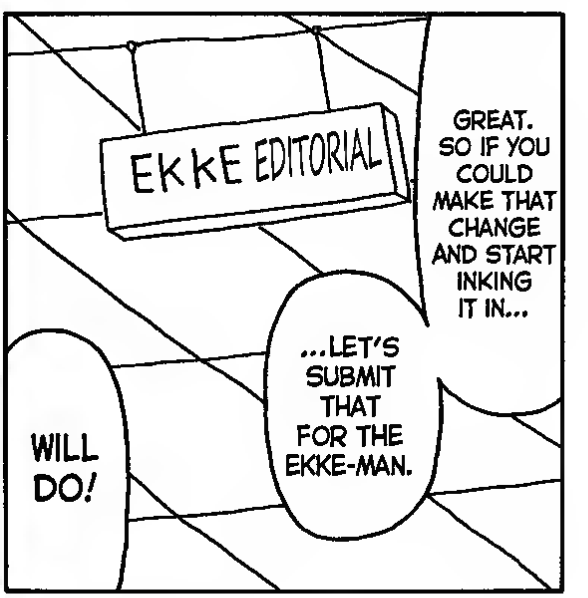

And so I flew back to Japan.
vwoosh
GOOD LUCK!
...my Japanese was rusty, and sounded strange to me.
One rice omelet.
I'll have a rice omelet ...
Have you decided on your order?
Restaurant
Since I'd been speaking only English for so long...
Was my father's bakery still around, even?
Thirteen years had already passed ...


SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING ...
tump tump
Baking Bread
Semi-Sparkling
NOT AT ALL ...
STILL, THOUGH, I THINK THIS STORY IS VERY GOOD.
I WAS HONESTLY MOVED BY IT...
IT'S A VERY QUIET LITTLE STORY ...
YES ...
THE FRIEND IT'S BASED ON IS A QUIET GUY...
LET'S SUBMIT THIS ONE FOR THE EKKE-MAN.
WHAT?
For real?

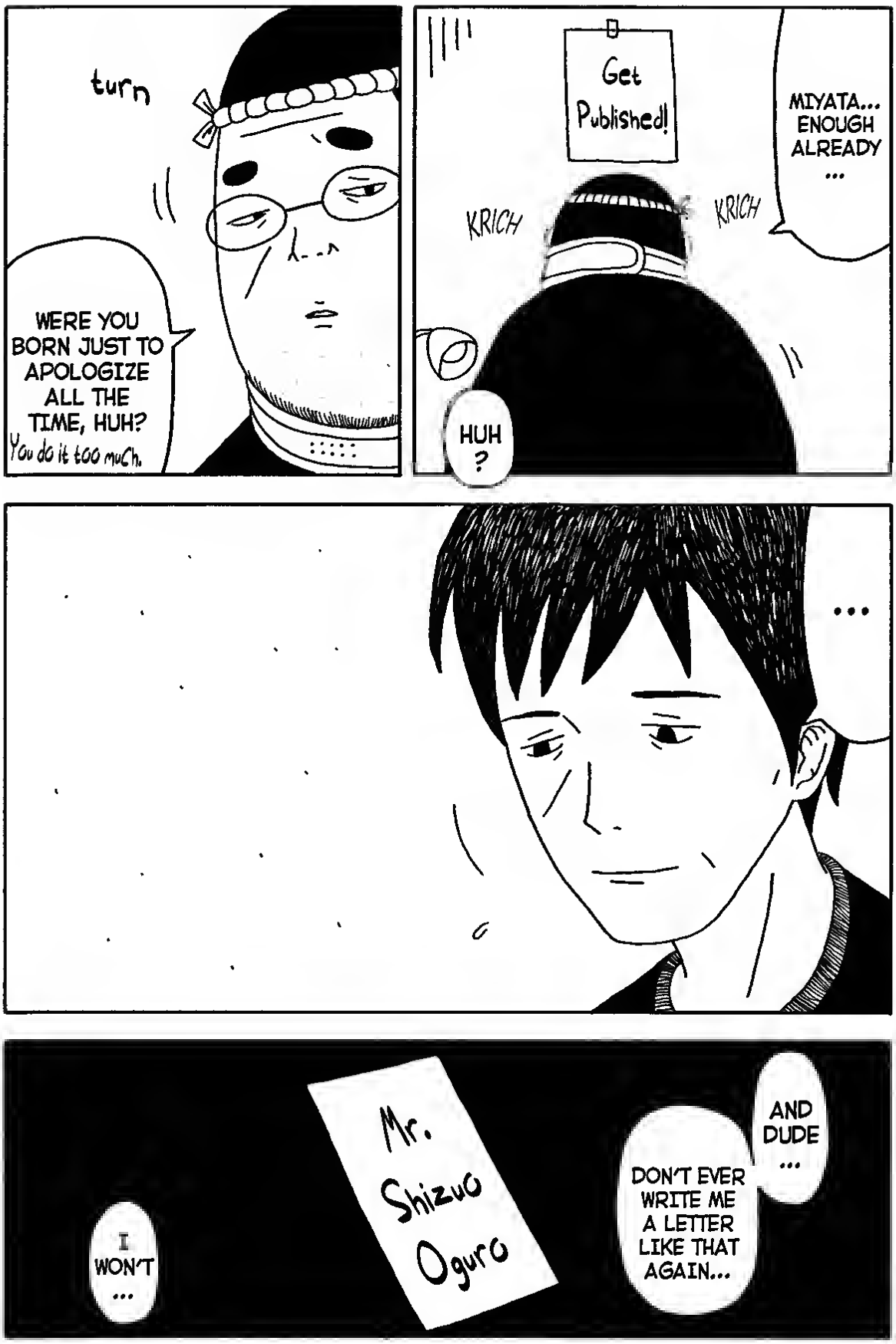
THIS CHARACTER CALLED "FRIEND S," WHO SHOWS UP FROM TIME TO TIME TO SUGGEST NEW PRODUCTS FOR THE BAKERY...
YES ...
I bet people will love them!
How about shiso buns?
YES?
ONLY ...
I'll be back.
So long, then!
Thanks.

Shiso is a Japanese herb in the mint family.

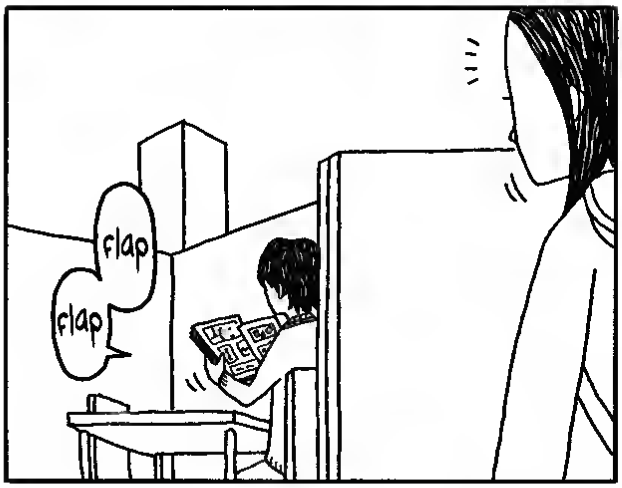

I THINK YOU OUGHT TO KEEP IT SIMPLE AND FOCUS ON THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP. MAYBE ADD ANOTHER EPISODE OR TWO TO GIVE IT DEPTH.
I SEE ...
I DON'T THINK YOU NEED HIM.
HUH ?

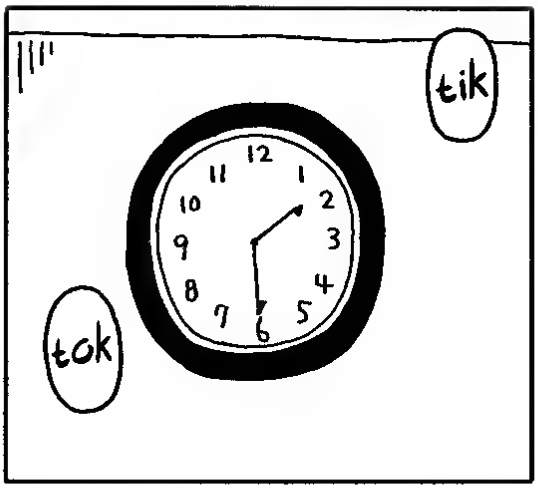


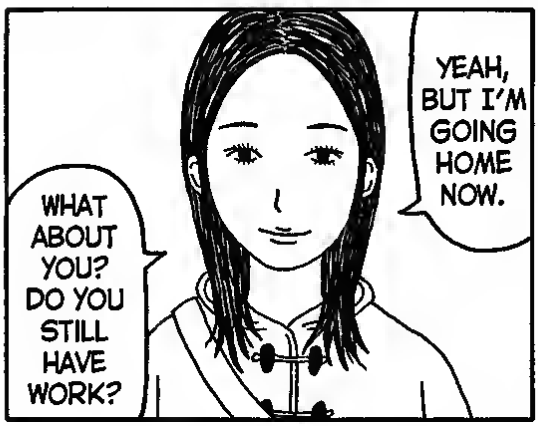
SHIZUO
...
A
B
AAAAAAA
EVEN LETTING ME IMPOSE ON YOUR FAMILY...
Home Run
...THANKS. REALLY...
Get Published
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
HMM?
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
Home Run
Bunt

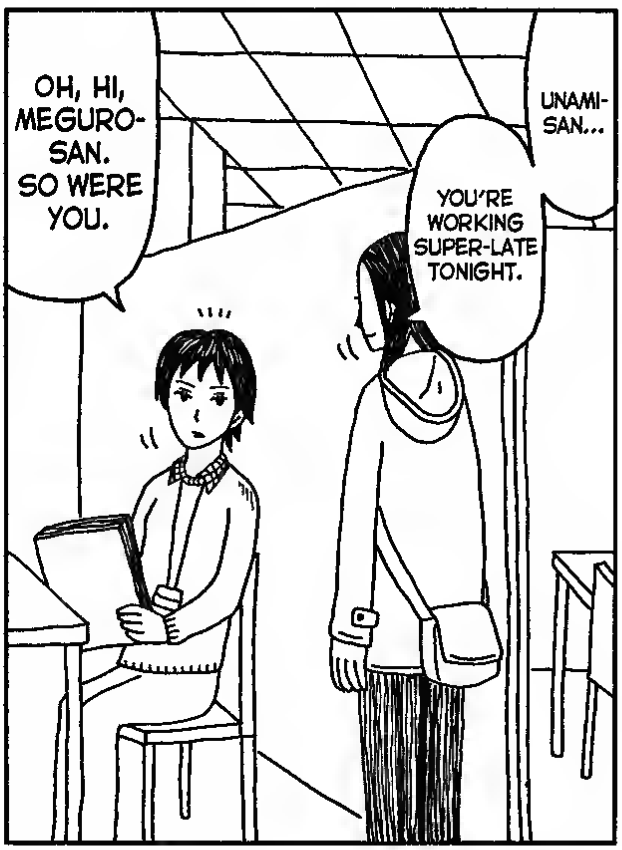

turn
WERE YOU BORN JUST TO APOLOGIZE ALL THE TIME, HUH?
You do it too much.
Get Published!
KRICH
KRICH
MIYATA... ENOUGH ALREADY ...
HUH ?
...
Mr. Shizuo Oguro
I WON'T ...
DON'T EVER WRITE ME A LETTER LIKE THAT AGAIN...
AND DUDE ...

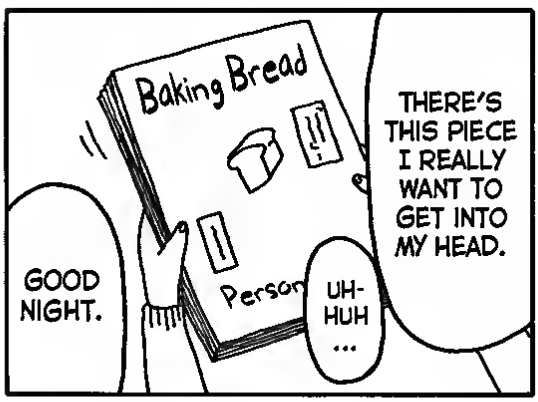
CHU
GAKU
KAN

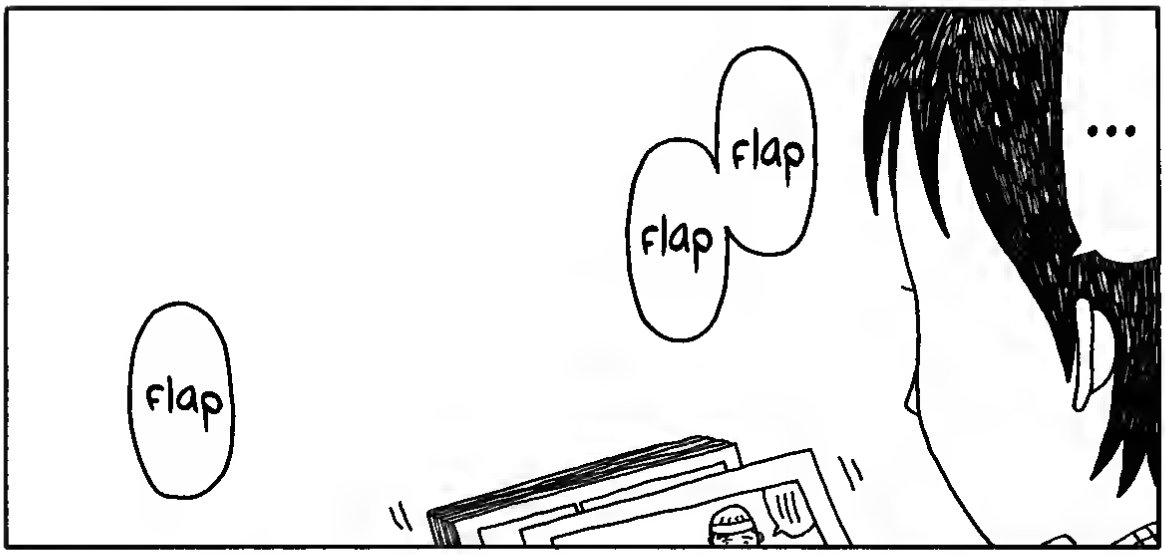

flap
flap

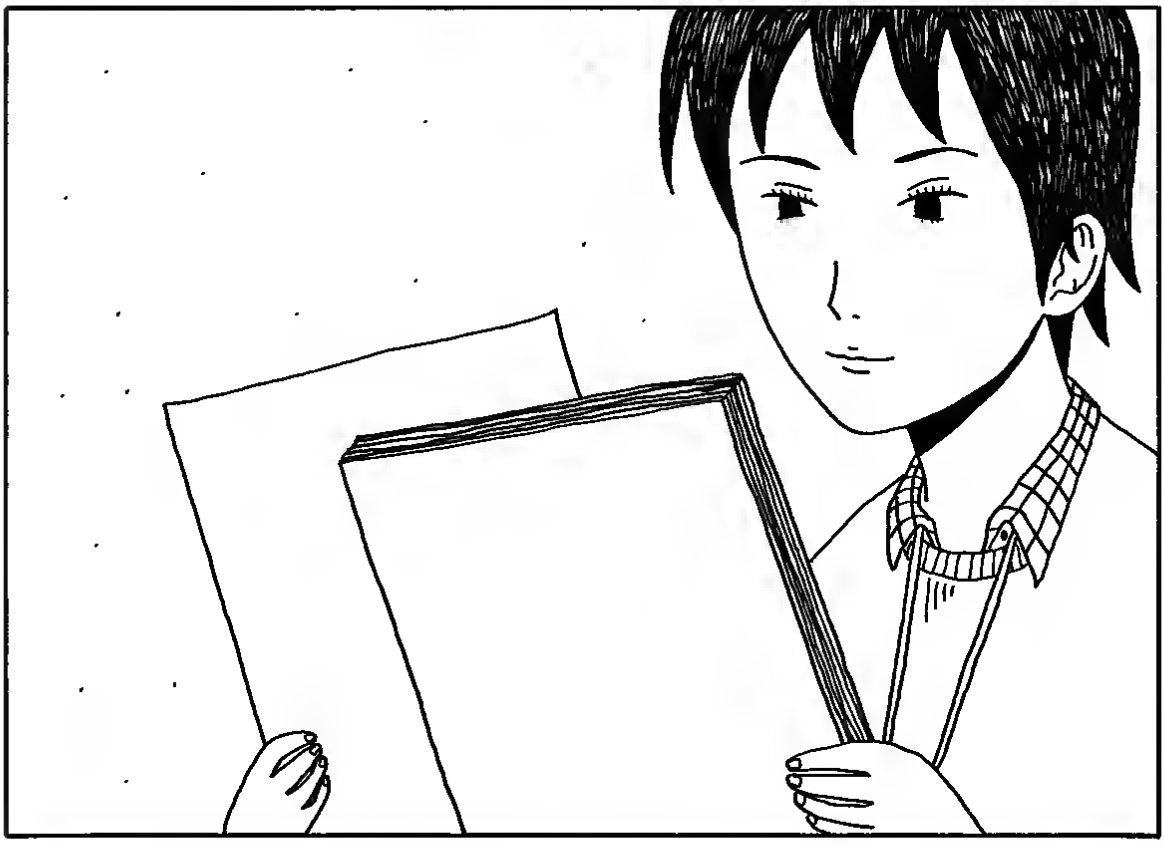

tik
tok


YEAH, BUT I'M GOING HOME NOW.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? DO YOU STILL HAVE WORK?


OH, HI, MEGURO-SAN. SO WERE YOU.
UNAMI-SAN...
YOU'RE WORKING SUPER-LATE TONIGHT.

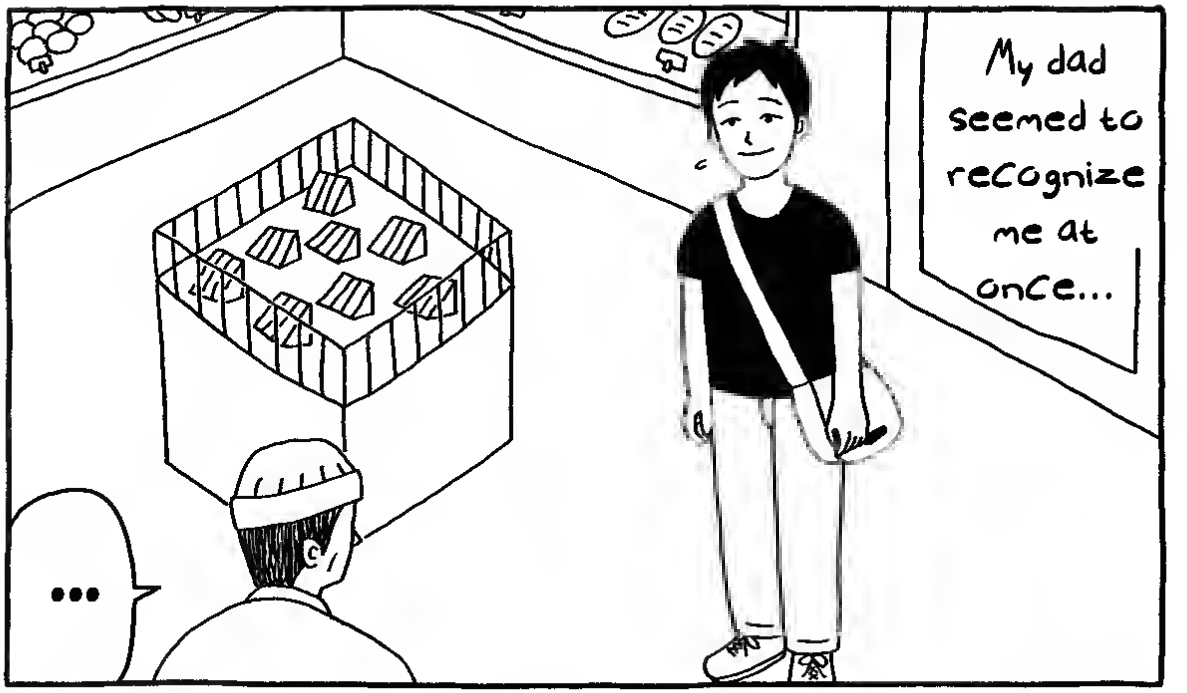

Baking Bread
Person
GOOD NIGHT.
UH-HUH ...
THERE'S THIS PIECE I REALLY WANT TO GET INTO MY HEAD.


flap
flap
flap
...



flap
Neighborhood Bakery
tinkle
...

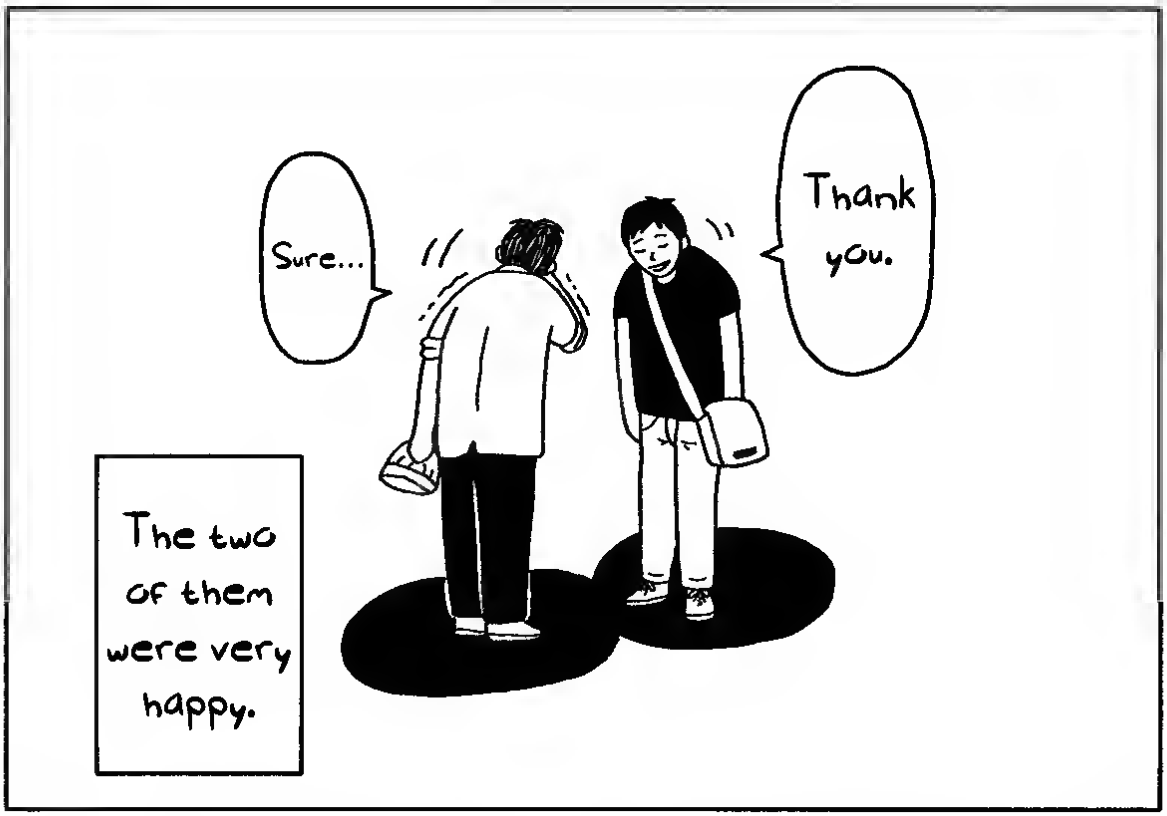
Neighborhood Bakery
The bakery was still there...
tinkle
tinkle
Wel—
...
The bakery that my dad had started 13 years ago, for me...


My dad seemed to recognize me at once...
...

...
I spoke the two sentences I'd been rehearsing over and over, like a mantra...

Would you please teach me?
...I'd like to learn how to bake bread.

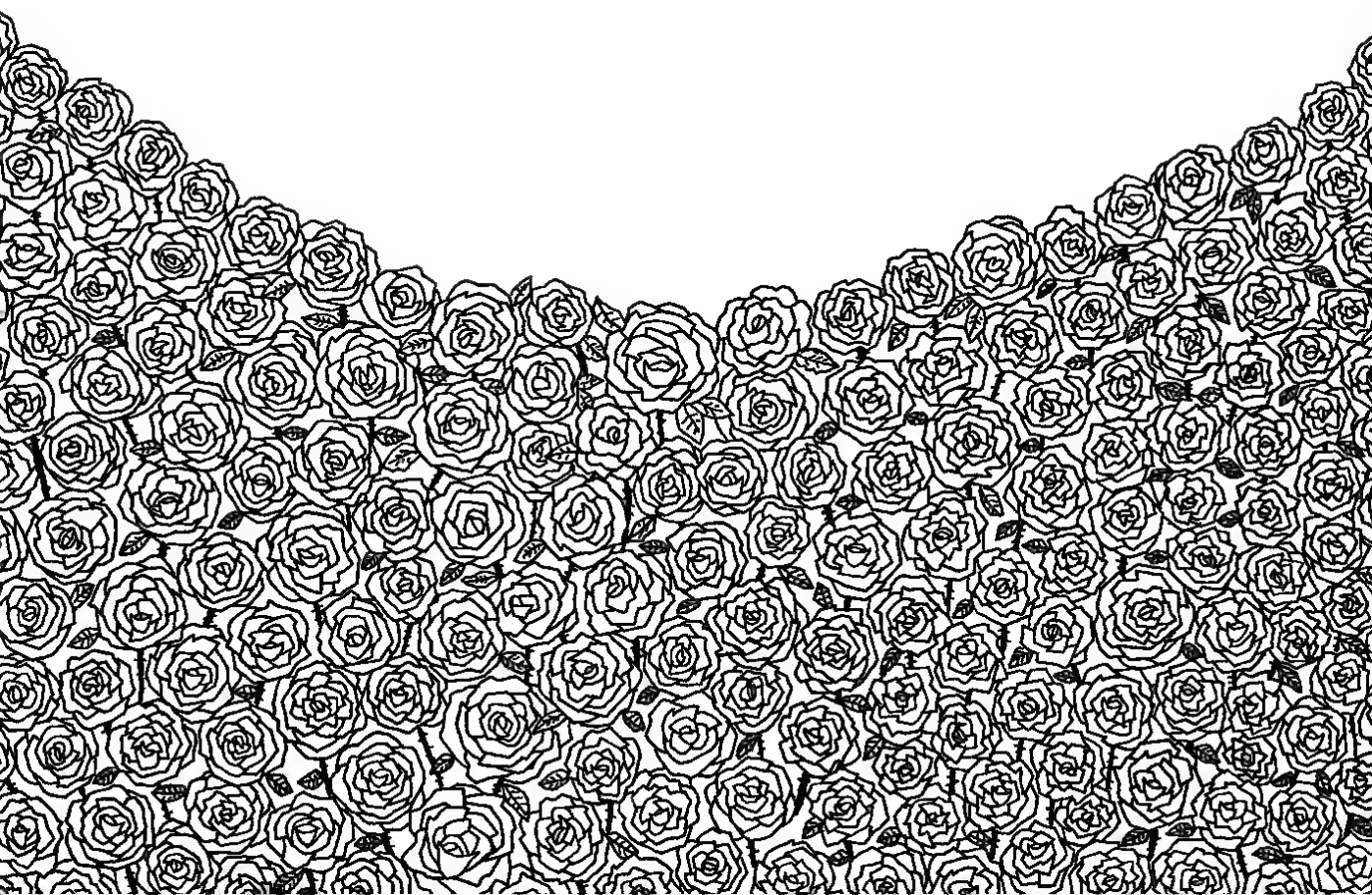
Sure...
trickle
trickle
The man mustered all the strength he had to answer...


Sure...
Thank you.
The two of them were very happy.

Neighborhood Bakery
Very, very happy ...
End

Chapter 27:

Thou Art More Beautiful Than a Rose



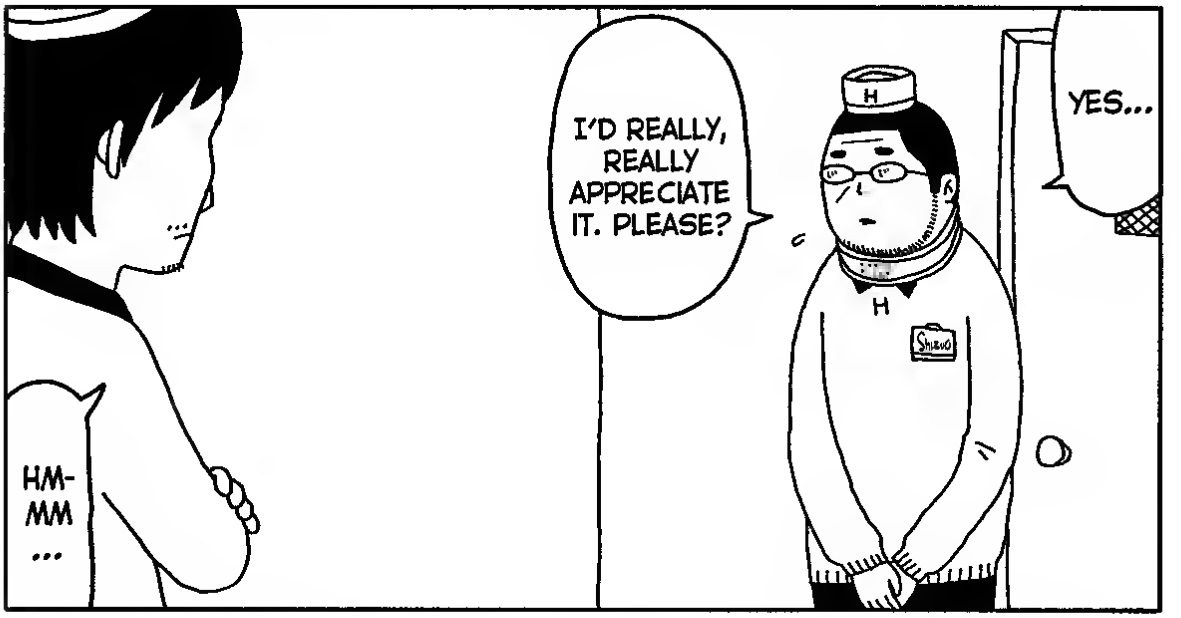
Baking Bread
Person Nakamura
You made the final cut for the EKKE-man.

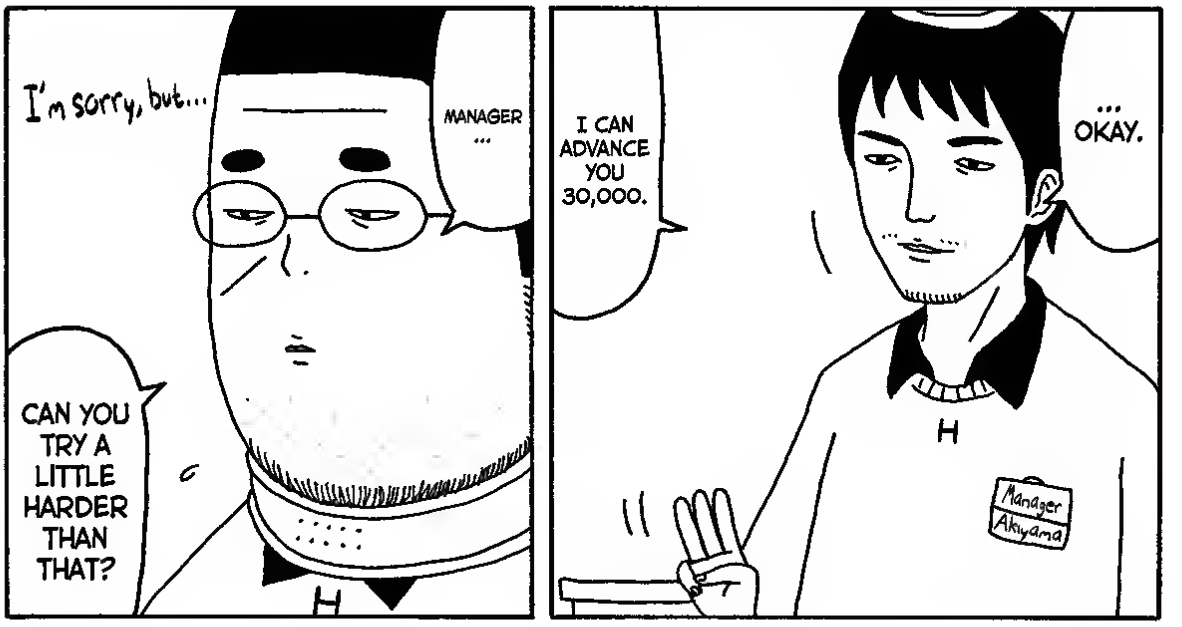
dip
WOW. TH-THANK YOU!

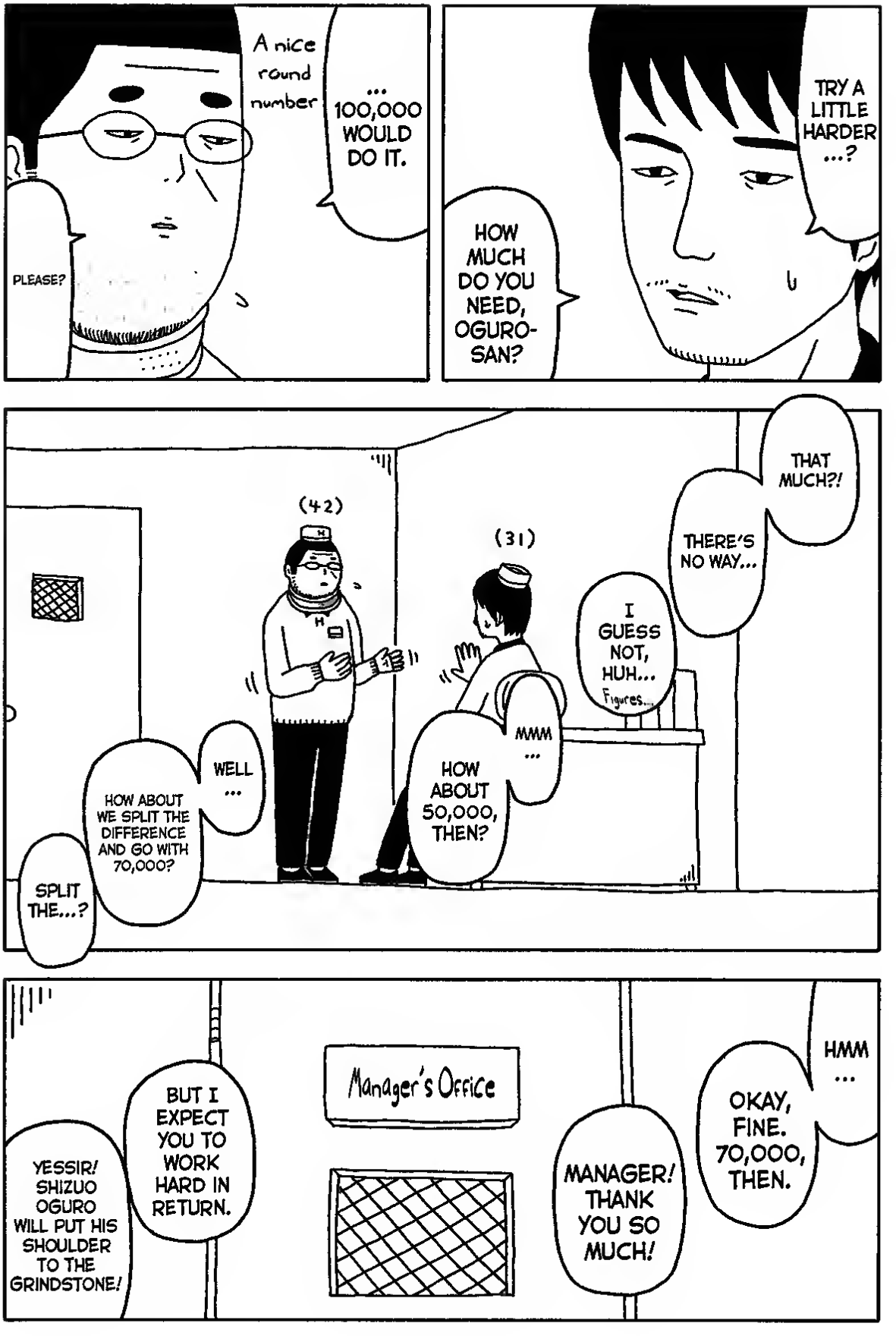
I'LL DO EVERYTHING I POSSIBLY CAN TO GET YOU AN HONORABLE MENTION OR BETTER—THAT IS, TO GET THIS PUBLISHED.
THE REST WILL BE UP TO ME.

EKKE EDITORIAL
THE EKKE-MAN MEETING IS IN TWO DAYS. I'LL CALL THE DAY AFTER TO LET YOU KNOW HOW IT WENT.
OKAY ...
Yes, please! I'm counting on you!
YESS-SS!
klench
...
THANK YOU! I'LL TALK TO YOU THEN!
...
phoo
NON SUGAR
THIS IS WINE TIME, FOR SURE...
A pre-celebration...
Chnk
HEY!
DAD ...
WANNA CLINK GLASSES WITH ME?
Such nice weather...
NO, I DON'T!
A
B
YOU SEE THE SUN?! Look at it!
WHADDAYA MEAN, "WINE TIME"?!
Never heard of it.

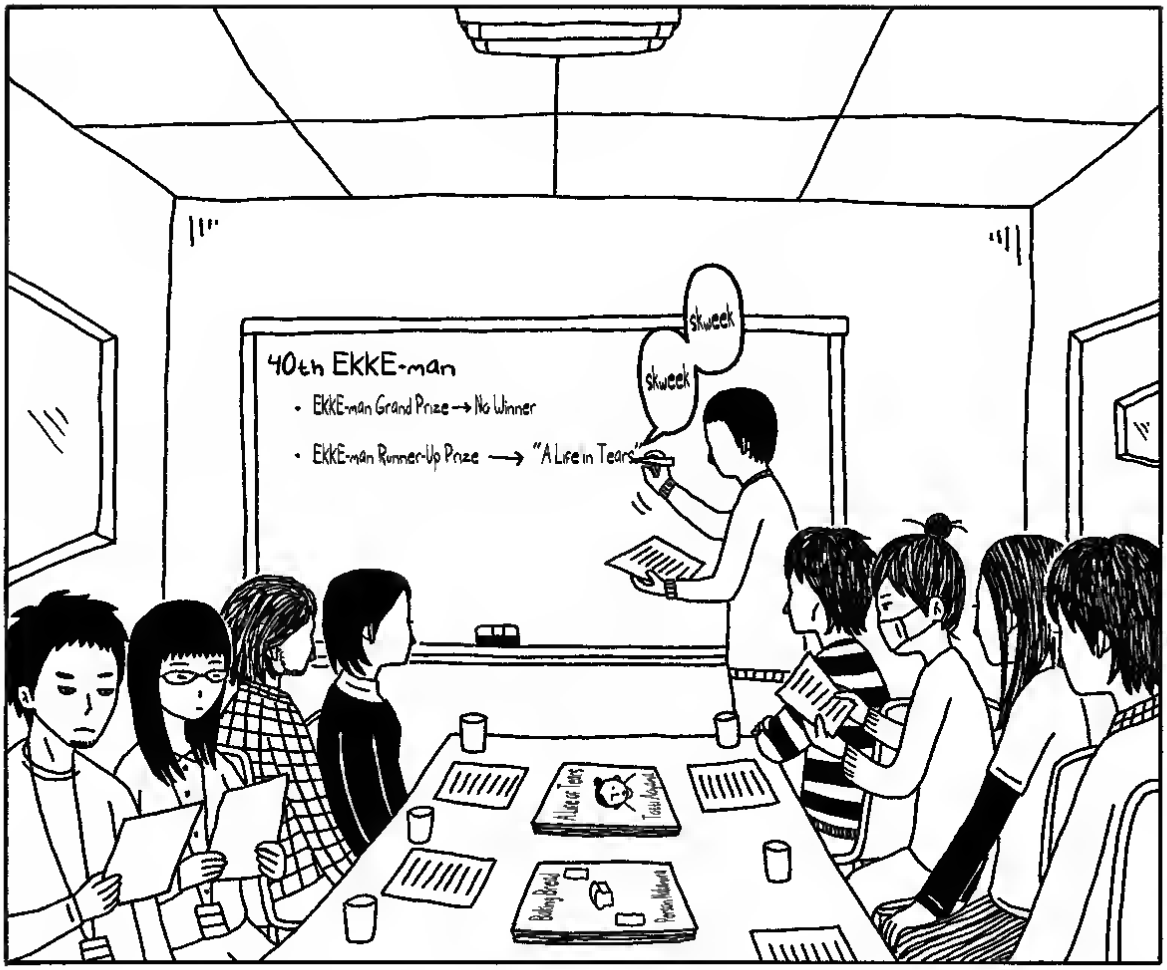
H-Burgers
Burgers H
Burgers H
Come work with us!
Now Hiring
AN ADVANCE?

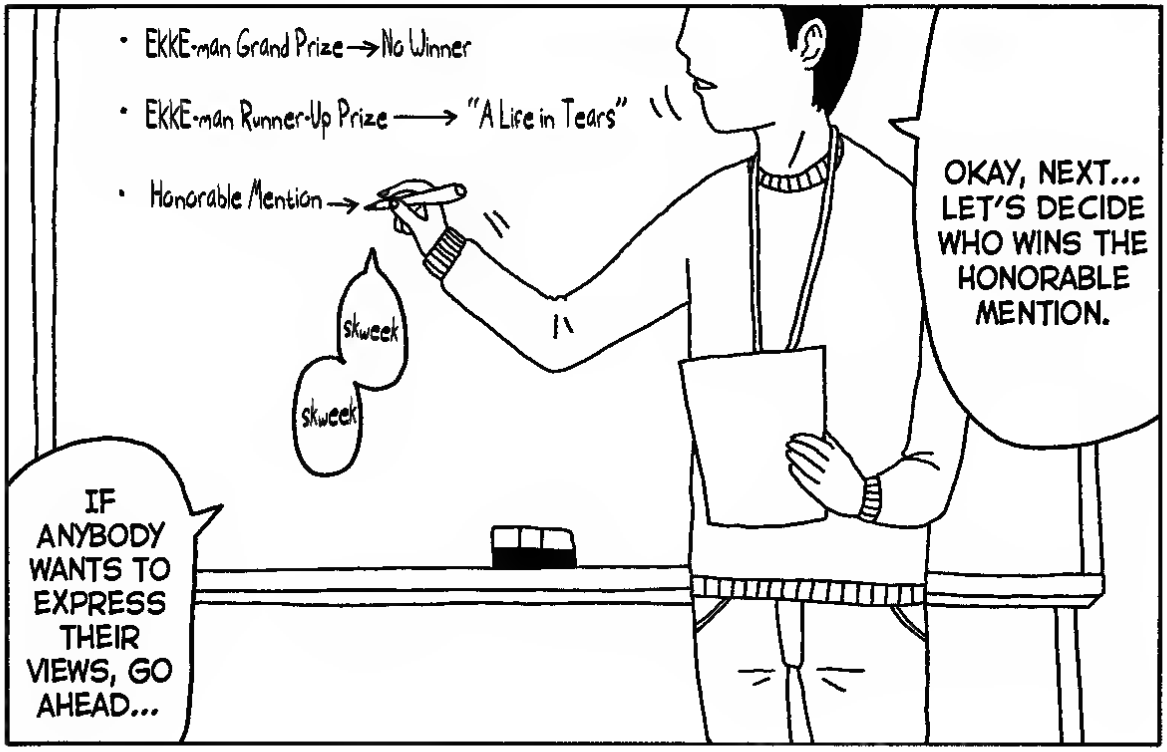

HM-MM...
I'D REALLY, REALLY APPRECIATE IT. PLEASE?
YES...
H
Shibuno

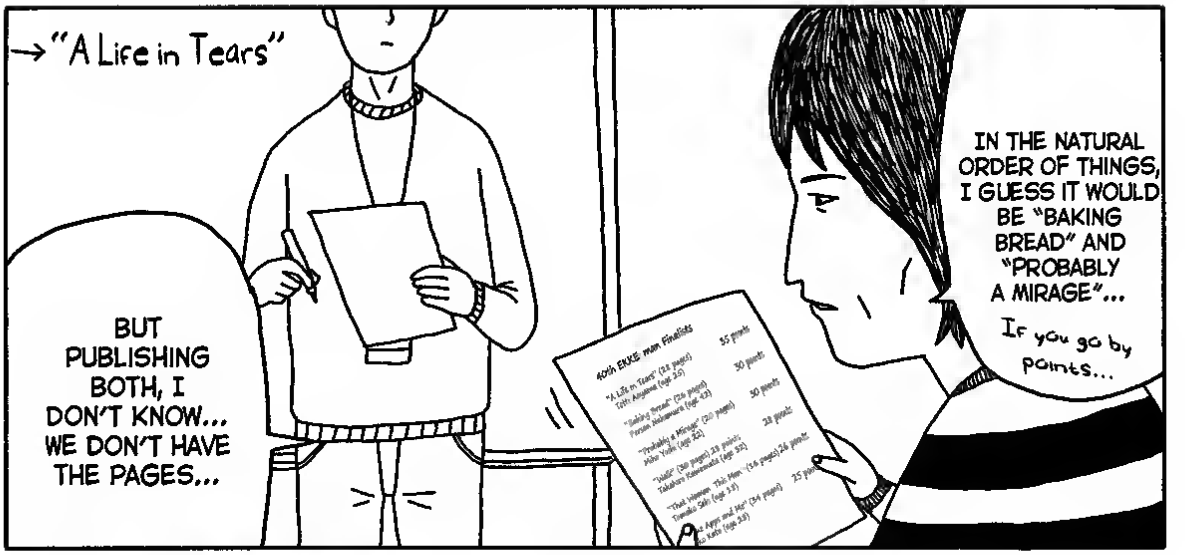

I'm sorry, but...
MANAGER ...
CAN YOU TRY A LITTLE HARDER THAN THAT?
H
I CAN ADVANCE YOU 30,000.
... OKAY.
H
Manager Akiyama

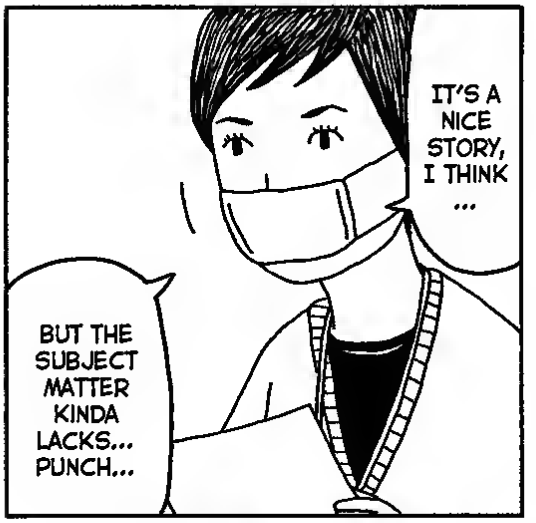

A nice round number
... 100,000 WOULD DO IT.
PLEASE?
HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED, OGURO-SAN?
TRY A LITTLE HARDER ...?
(42)
(31)
THAT MUCH?!
THERE'S NO WAY...
I GUESS NOT, HUH... Figures...
MMM ...
HOW ABOUT 50,000, THEN?
WELL ...
HOW ABOUT WE SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE AND GO WITH 70,000?
SPLIT THE...?
Manager's Office
YESSIR! SHIZUO OGURO WILL PUT HIS SHOULDER TO THE GRINDSTONE!
BUT I EXPECT YOU TO WORK HARD IN RETURN.
MANAGER! THANK YOU SO MUCH!
OKAY, FINE. 70,000, THEN.
HMM ...

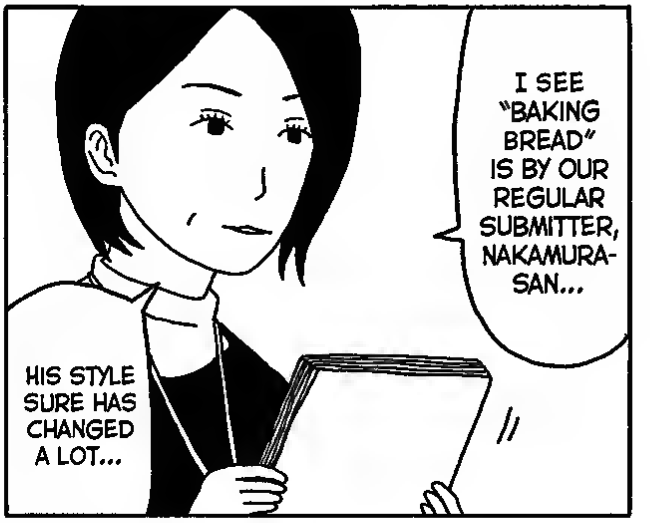
40th EKKE-man Conference
CHU
GAKU
KAN
kaw
kaw
40th EKKE-man Finalists
"A Life in Tears" (28 pages)
Totti Aoyama (age 25)
35 points
"Baking Bread" (26 pages)
Person Nakamura (age 42)
30 points
"Probably a Mirage" (20 pages)
Miho Yoshi (age 22)
30 points
"Walk" (30 pages)
Takahiro Kawamata (age 32)
28 points
"That Woman, This Man" (16 pages)
Tomoko Seki (age 18)
26 points
"Game Apps and Me" (34 pages)
Kyoko Kato (age 28)
25 points

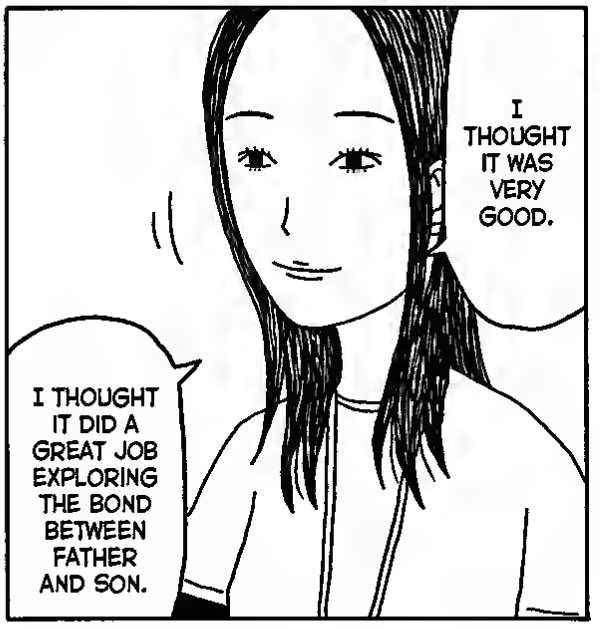

40th EkkE-man
• EkkE-man Grand Prize → No Winner
• EkkE-man Runner-Up Prize → "A Life in Tears"
skweek
skweek

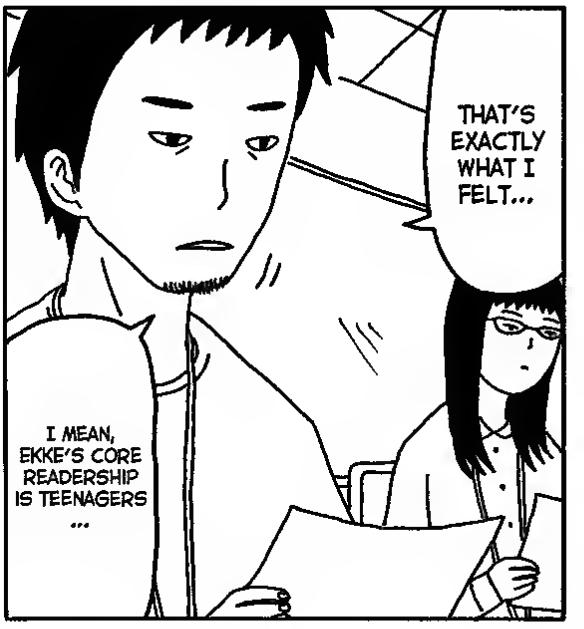

• EkkE-man Grand Prize → No Winner
• EkkE-man Runner-Up Prize → "A Life in Tears"
• Honorable Mention →
skweek
skweek
OKAY, NEXT... LET'S DECIDE WHO WINS THE HONORABLE MENTION.
IF ANYBODY WANTS TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS, GO AHEAD...


→"A Life in Tears"
BUT PUBLISHING BOTH, I DON'T KNOW... WE DON'T HAVE THE PAGES...
IN THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS, I GUESS IT WOULD BE "BAKING BREAD" AND "PROBABLY A MIRAGE"...
If you go by points...
40th EKKE man Finalists
55 points
30 points
30 points
28 points
25 points

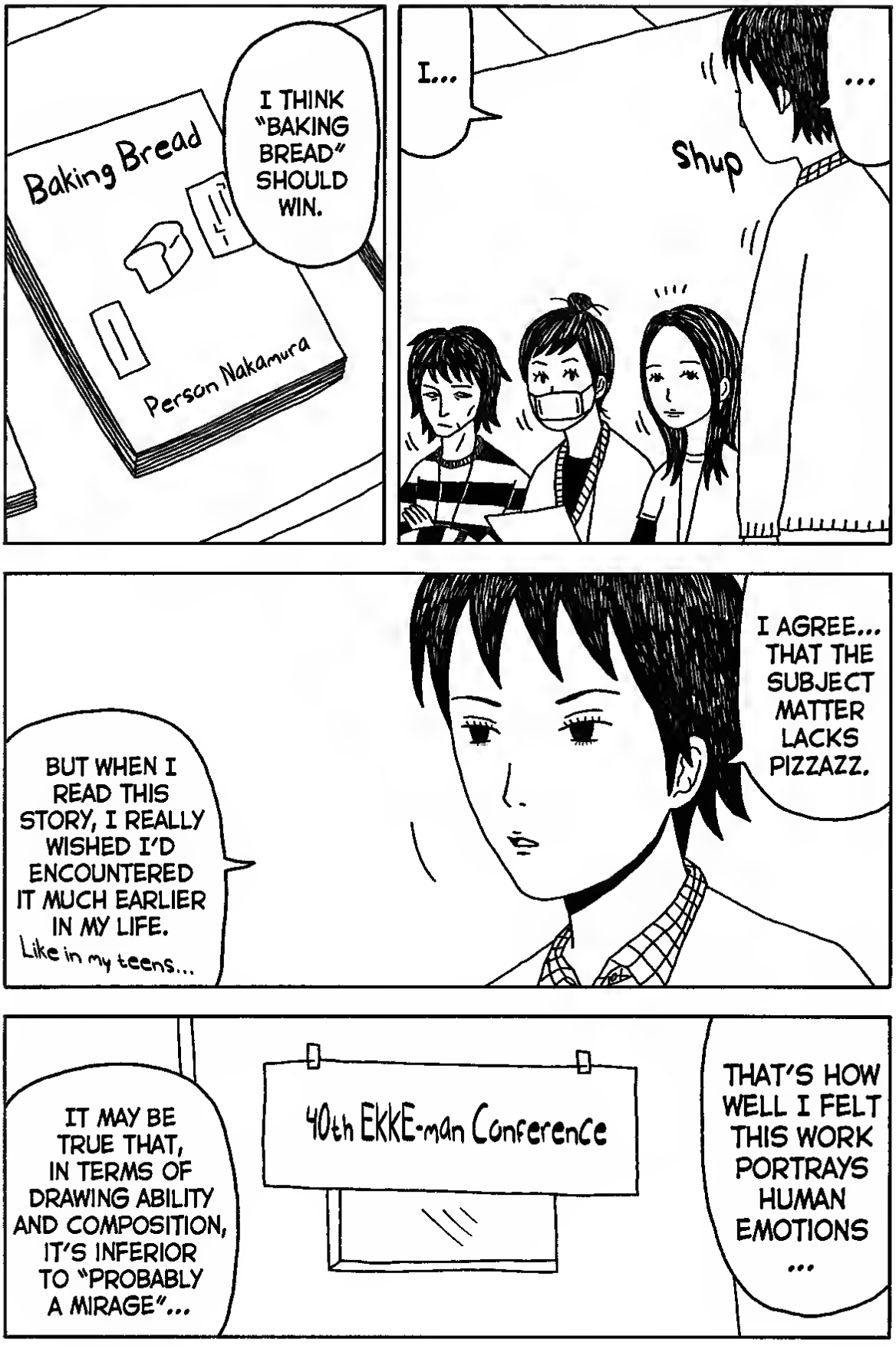

IT'S A NICE STORY, I THINK ...
BUT THE SUBJECT MATTER KINDA LACKS... PUNCH...

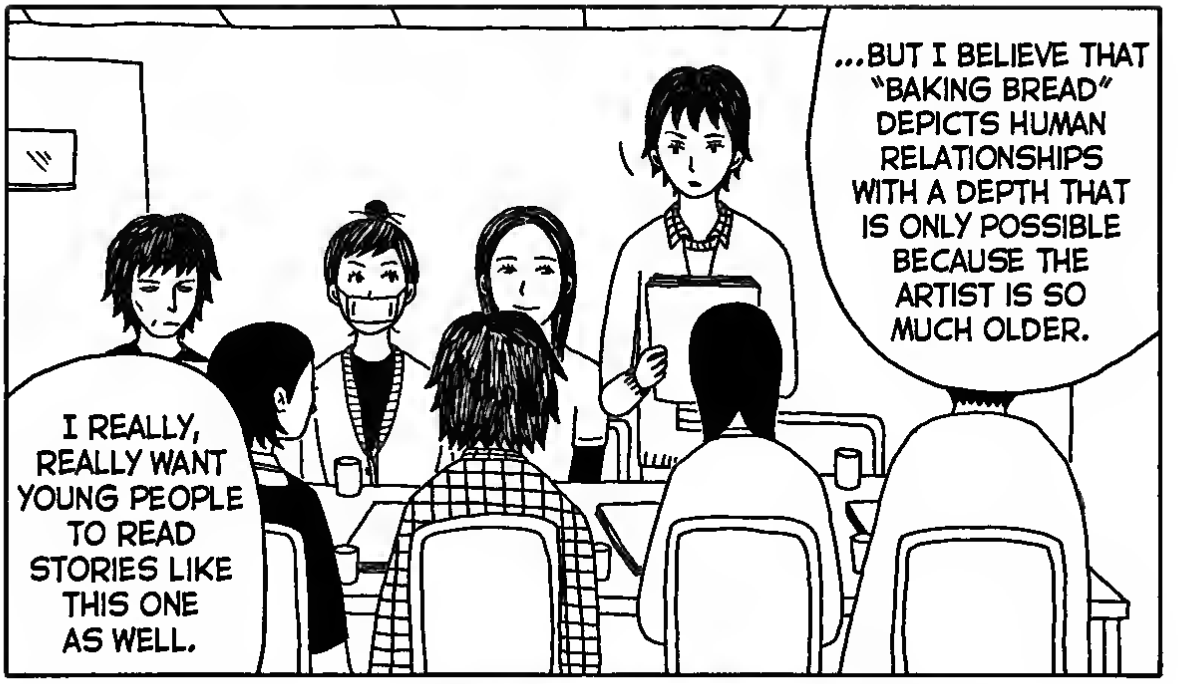

I SEE "BAKING BREAD" IS BY OUR REGULAR SUBMITTER, NAKAMURA-SAN...
HIS STYLE SURE HAS CHANGED A LOT...

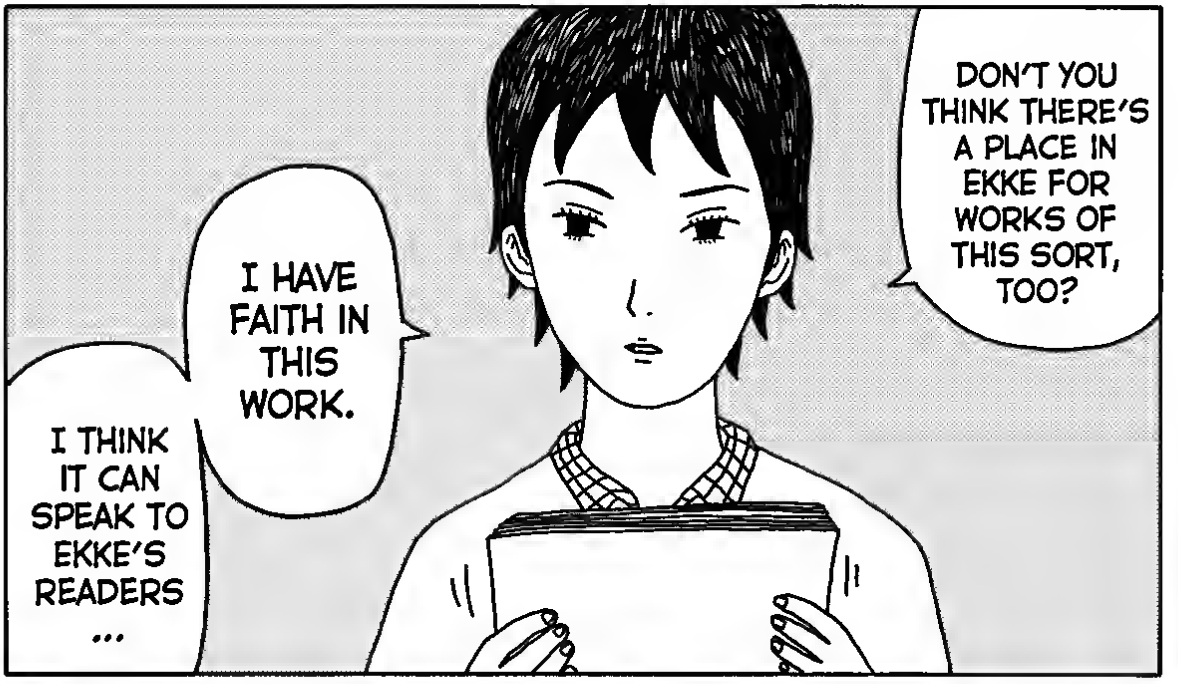

I THOUGHT IT WAS VERY GOOD.
I THOUGHT IT DID A GREAT JOB EXPLORING THE BOND BETWEEN FATHER AND SON.


THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I FELT...
I MEAN, EKKE'S CORE READERSHIP IS TEENAGERS ...

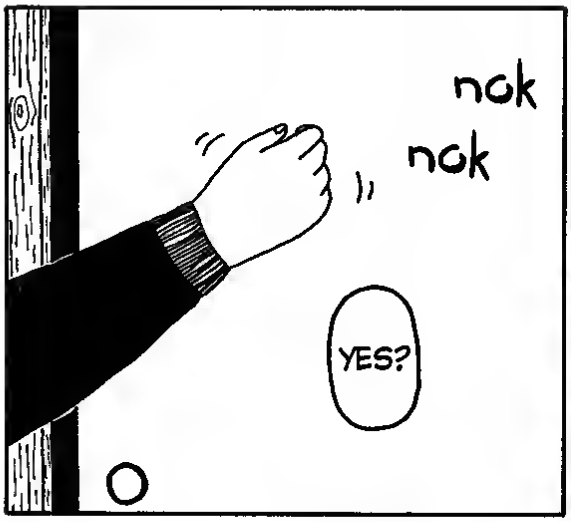
Plus she can really draw.
YEAH, AND THE SUBJECT MATTER WAS REALLY ORIGINAL AND INTERESTING, TOO...
AND SHE'S ONLY 22...
Probably a Mirage
Miho Yoshida
...I HAVE TO PUT MY VOTE IN FOR "PROBABLY A MIRAGE."
FOR A FIRST-TIME SUBMISSION, IT'S VERY POLISHED. AMAZINGLY WELL-DONE.
I KNOW. THIS ONE MAKES ME LOOK FORWARD TO READING HER NEXT ONE...
Baking Bread
Person Nakamura
Probably a Mirage
Miho Yoshida
YEAH, THIS YOSHIDA-SAN IS SURE TO GROW. SHE'LL REALLY DEVELOP.
"PROBABLY A MIRAGE" MIGHT SCORE BETTER WITH YOUNG READERS...
YEAH, MAYBE "BAKING BREAD" IS A LITTLE TOO... QUIET...


Baking Bread
Person Nakamura
I THINK "BAKING BREAD" SHOULD WIN.
I...
...
Shup
I AGREE... THAT THE SUBJECT MATTER LACKS PIZZAZZ.
BUT WHEN I READ THIS STORY, I REALLY WISHED I'D ENCOUNTERED IT MUCH EARLIER IN MY LIFE.
Like in my teens...
IT MAY BE TRUE THAT, IN TERMS OF DRAWING ABILITY AND COMPOSITION, IT'S INFERIOR TO "PROBABLY A MIRAGE"...
40th EKKE-man Conference
THAT'S HOW WELL I FELT THIS WORK PORTRAYS HUMAN EMOTIONS ...

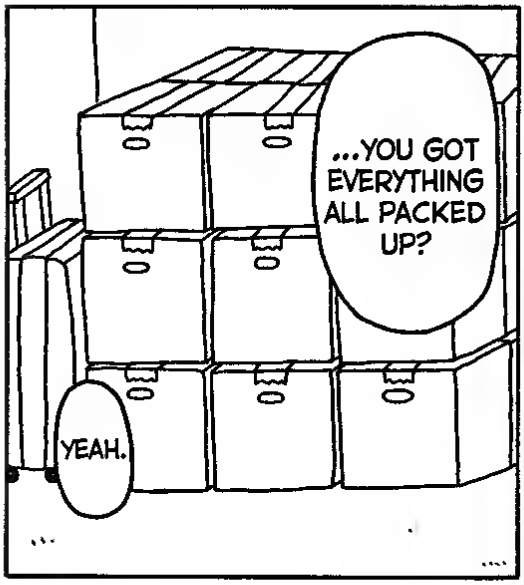

...BUT I BELIEVE THAT "BAKING BREAD" DEPICTS HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH A DEPTH THAT IS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE ARTIST IS SO MUCH OLDER.
I REALLY, REALLY WANT YOUNG PEOPLE TO READ STORIES LIKE THIS ONE AS WELL.

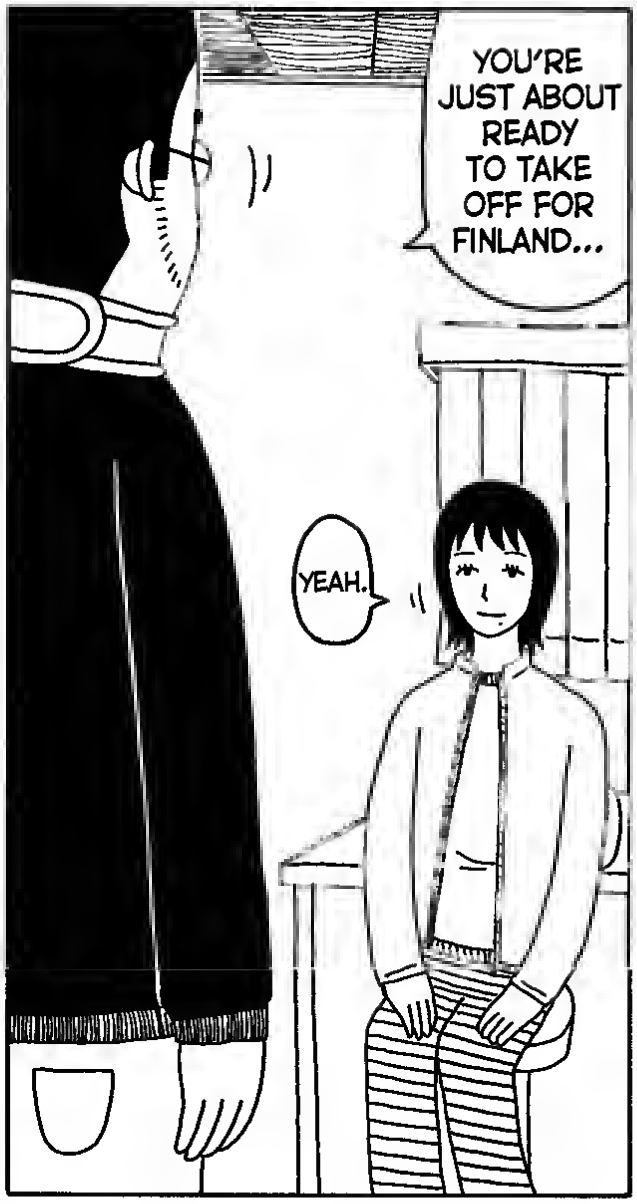

DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S A PLACE IN EKKE FOR WORKS OF THIS SORT, TOO?
I HAVE FAITH IN THIS WORK.
I THINK IT CAN SPEAK TO EKKE'S READERS ...

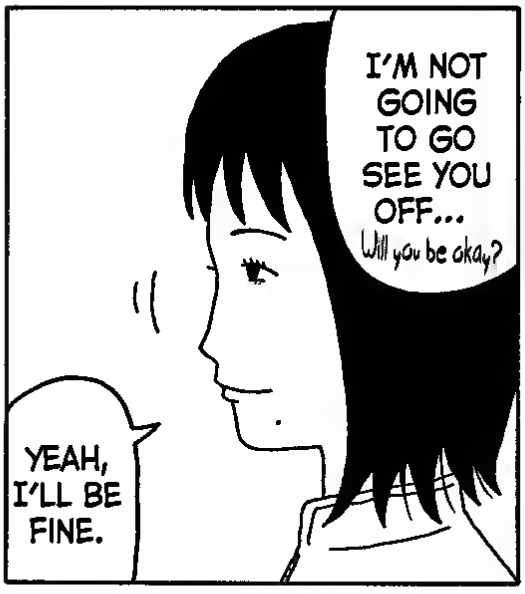
I REALLY DO...

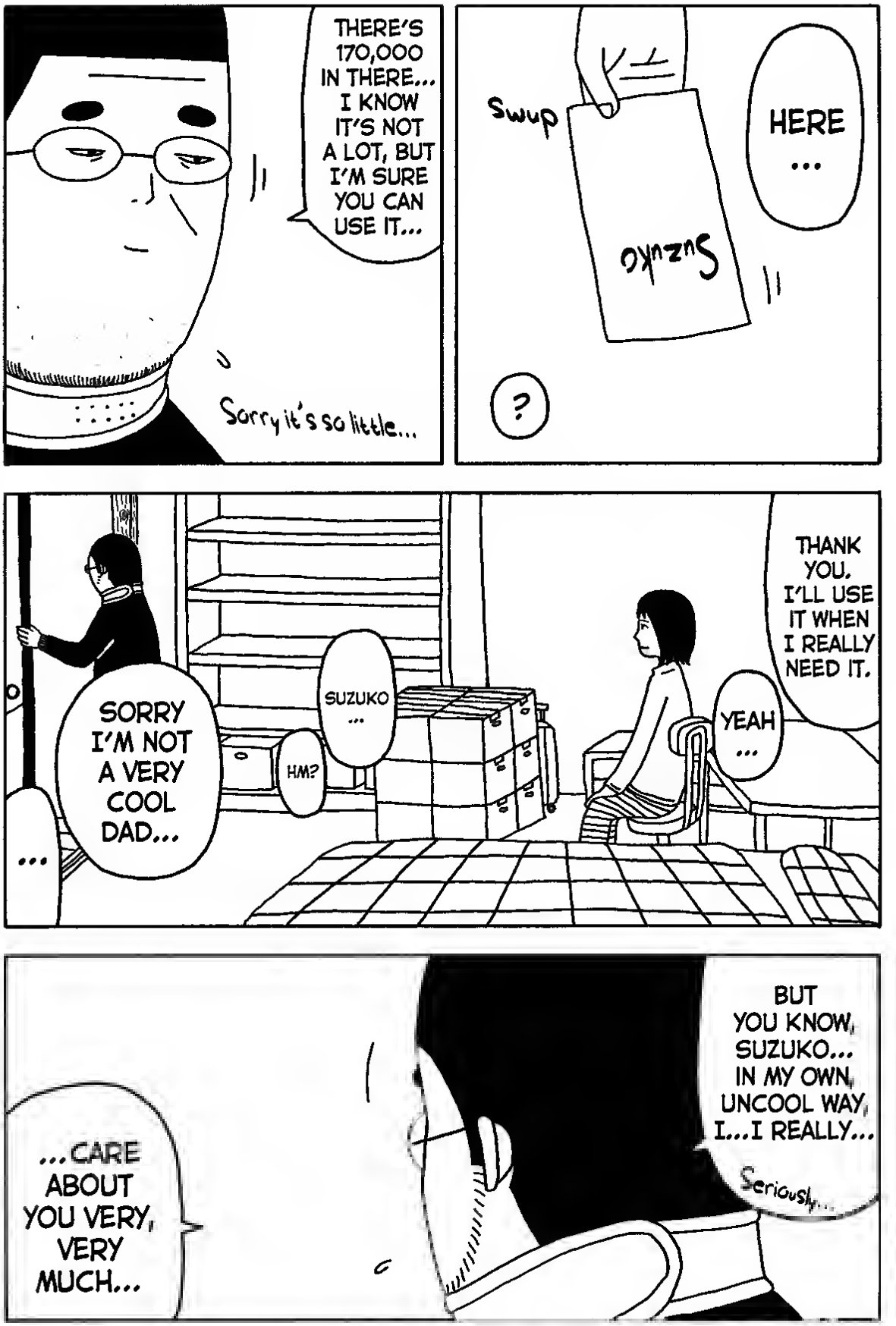

nok
nok
YES?

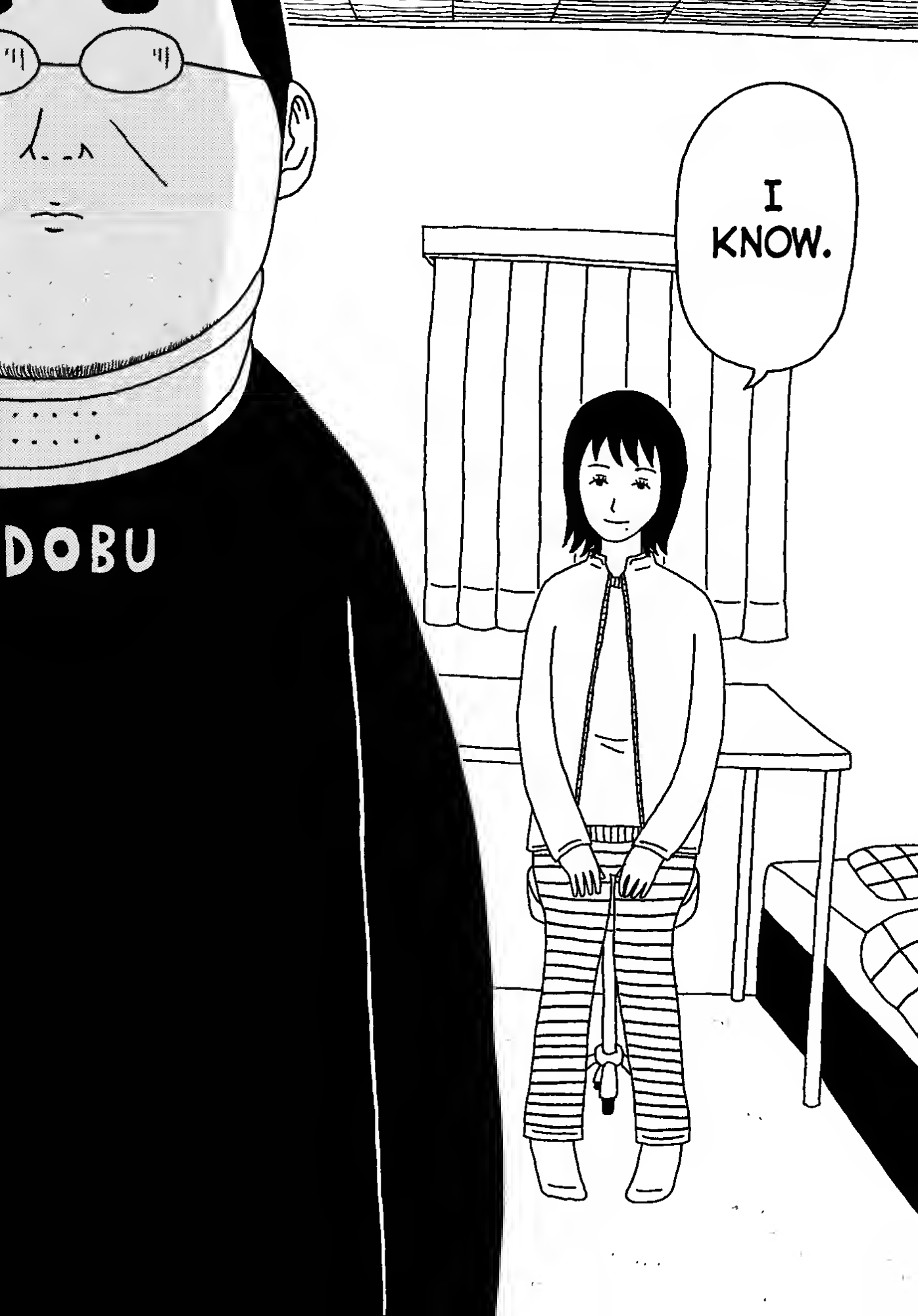
A
B

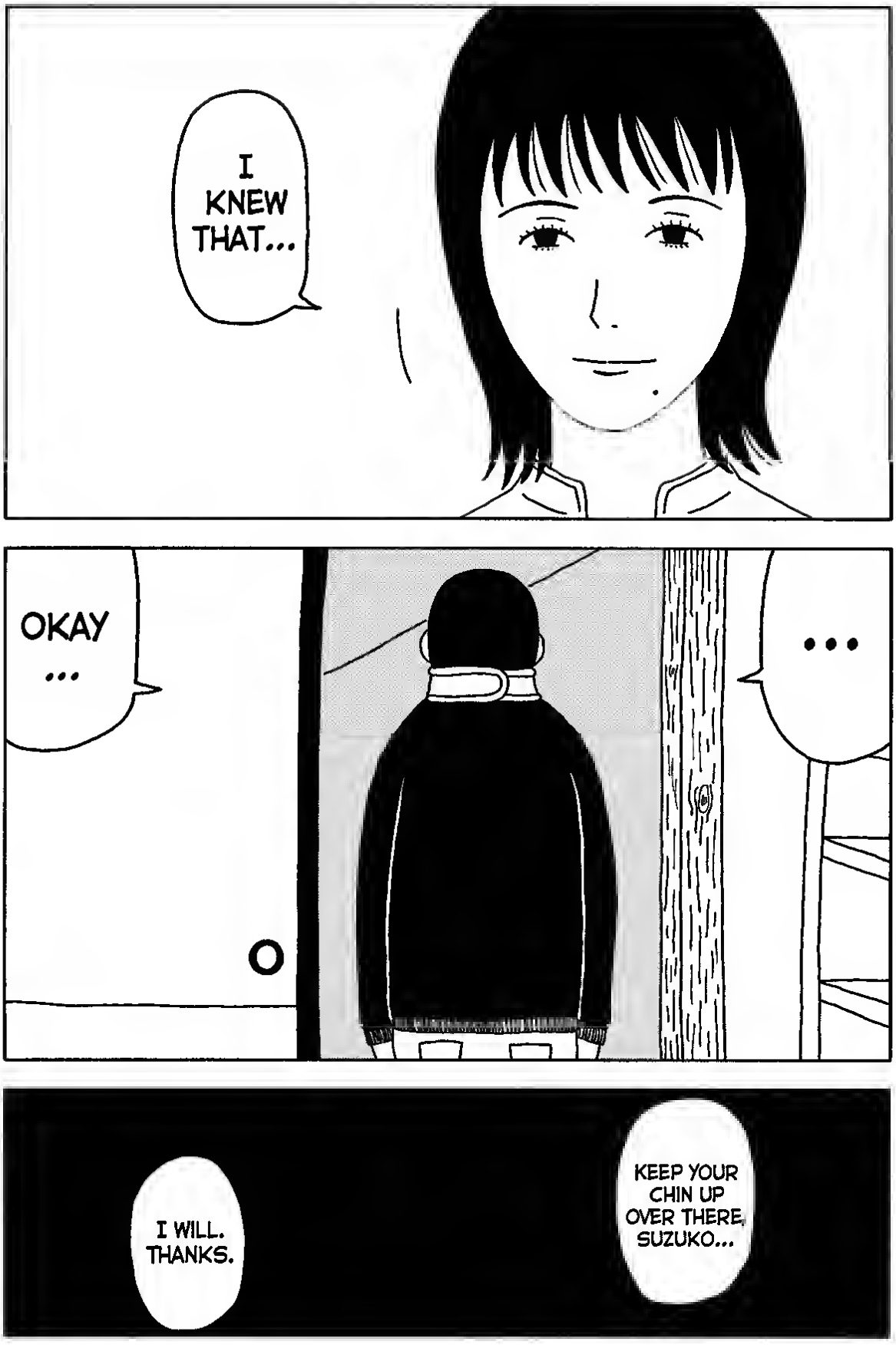

...YOU GOT EVERYTHING ALL PACKED UP?
YEAH.

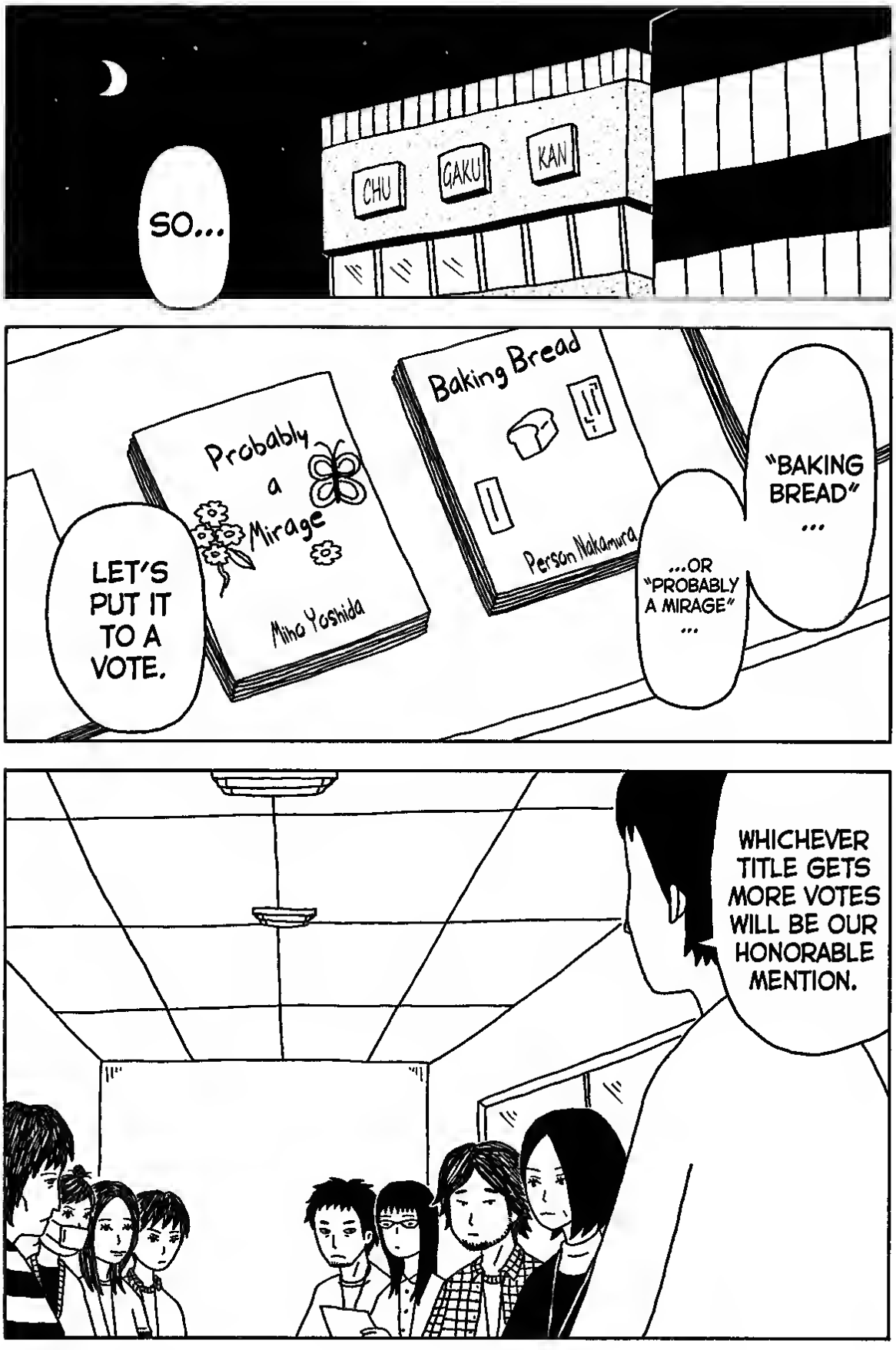

YOU'RE JUST ABOUT READY TO TAKE OFF FOR FINLAND...
YEAH.

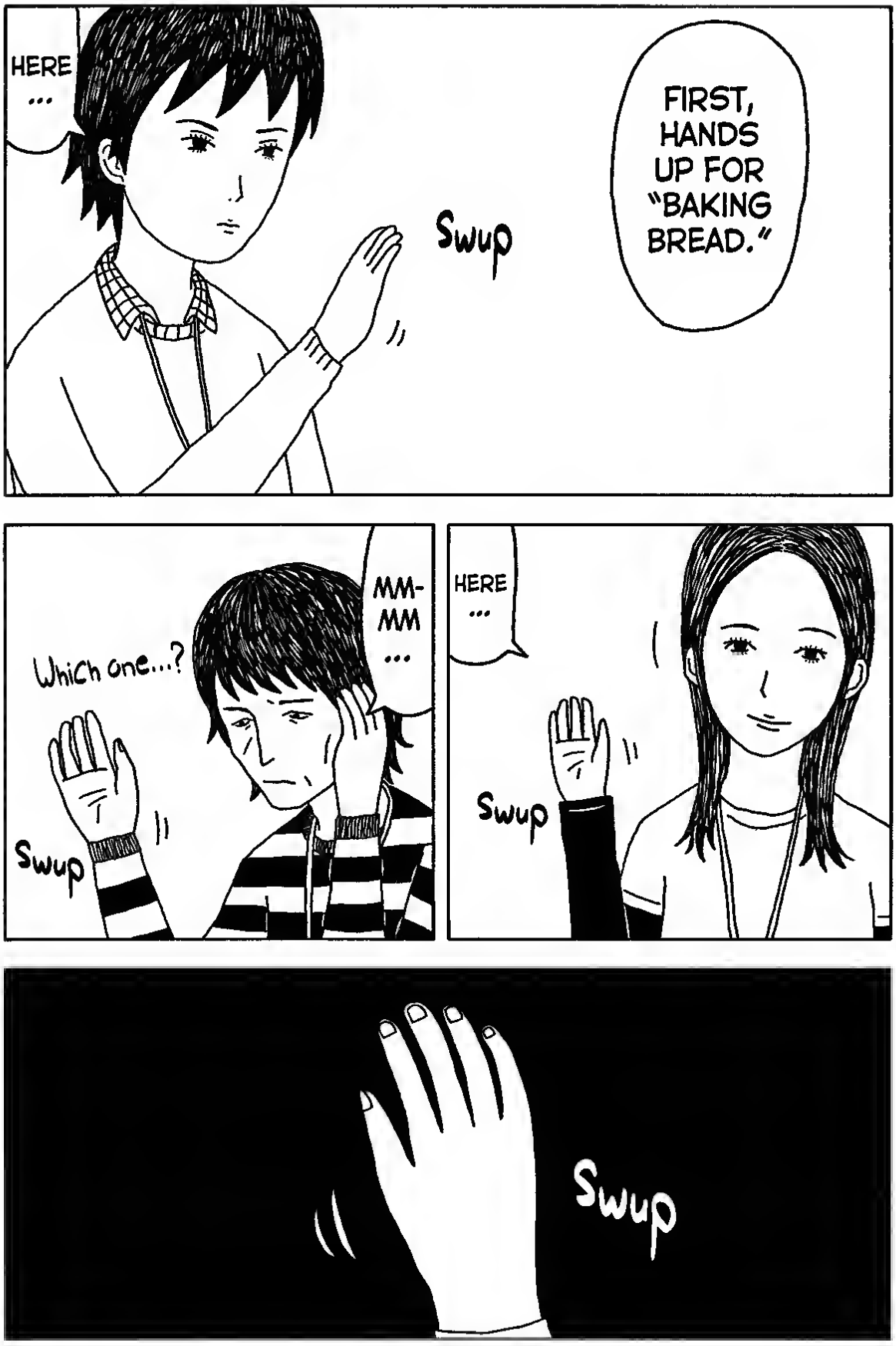

I'M NOT GOING TO GO SEE YOU OFF...
Will you be okay?
YEAH, I'LL BE FINE.

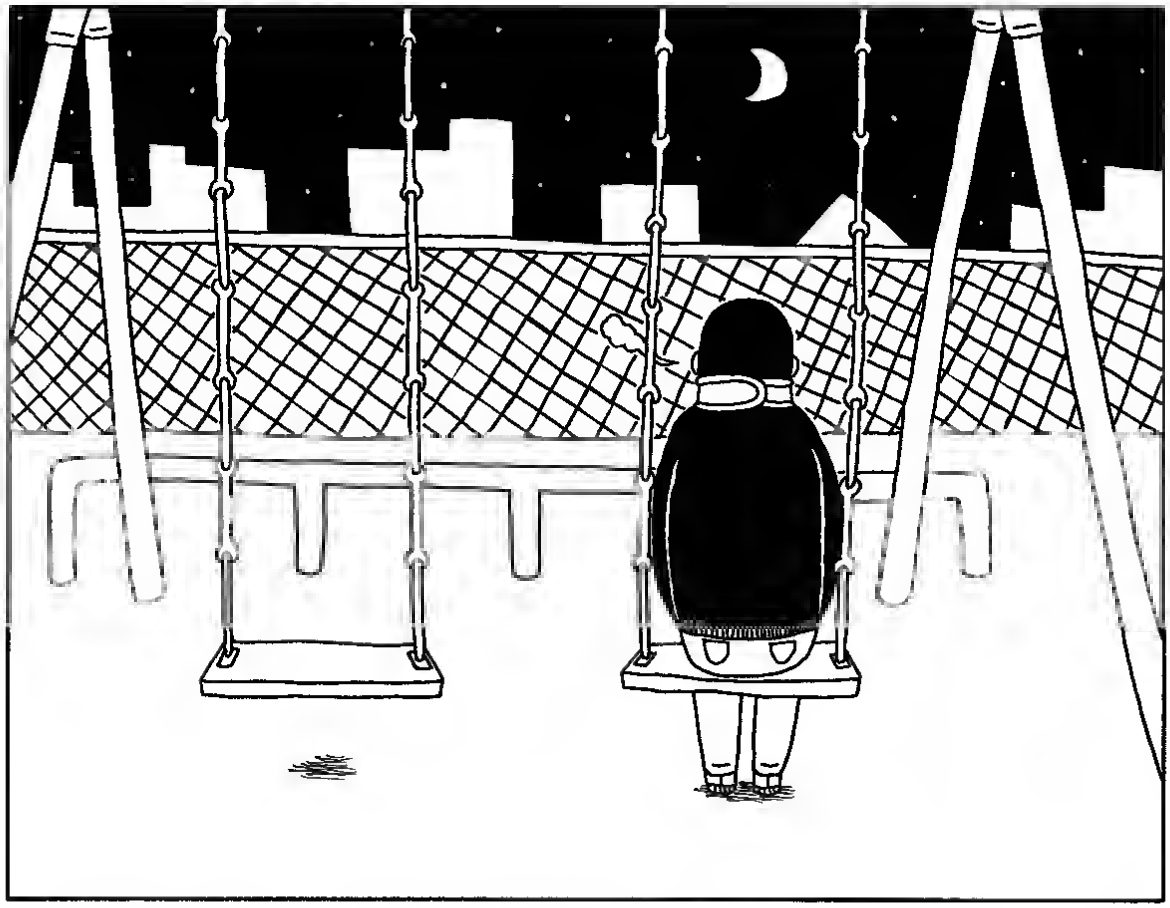

THERE'S 170,000 IN THERE... I KNOW IT'S NOT A LOT, BUT I'M SURE YOU CAN USE IT...
Sorry it's so little...
Swup
Suzuko
HERE ...
?
THANK YOU. I'LL USE IT WHEN I REALLY NEED IT.
YEAH ...
SUZUKO ...
HM?
SORRY I'M NOT A VERY COOL DAD...
...
BUT YOU KNOW, SUZUKO... IN MY OWN, UNCOOL WAY, I...I REALLY...
Seriously...
...CARE ABOUT YOU VERY, VERY MUCH...

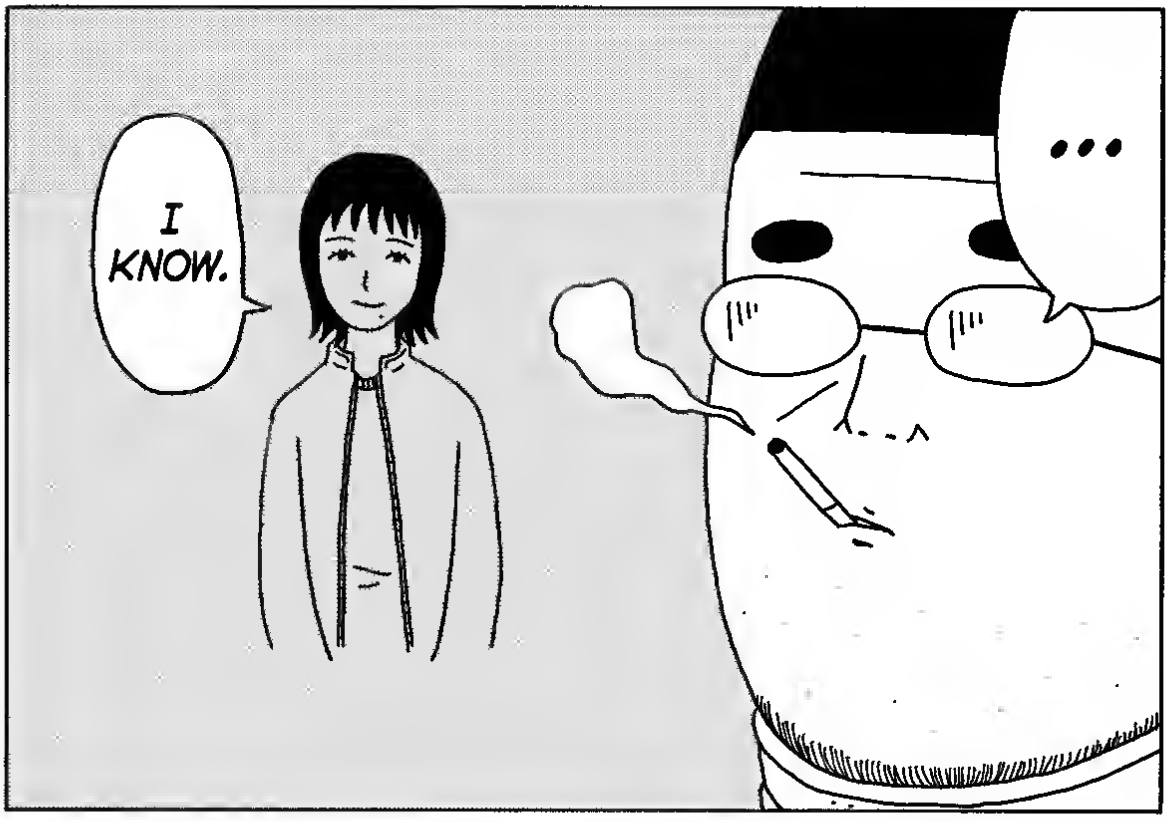

DOBU
I KNOW.

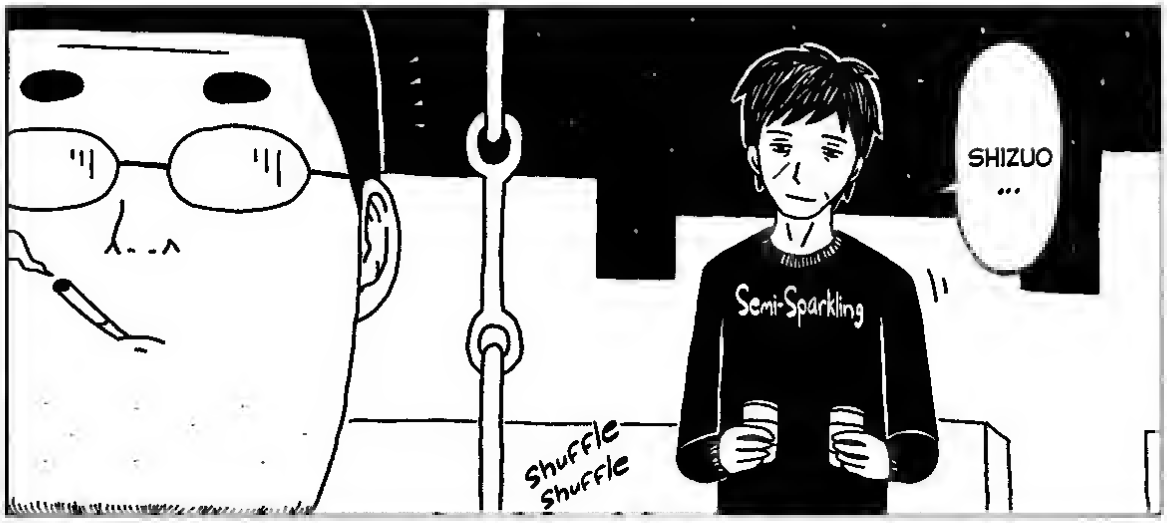

I KNEW THAT...
OKAY ...
...
KEEP YOUR CHIN UP OVER THERE, SUZUKO...
I WILL. THANKS.

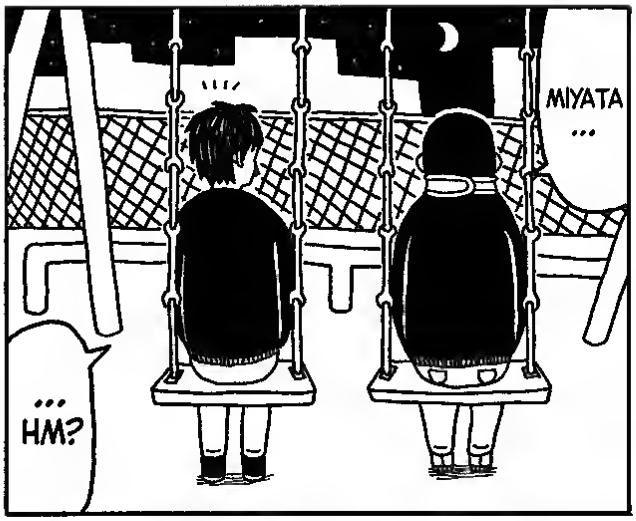

SO...
CHU
GAKU
KAN
Probably a Mirage
Miho Yoshida
Baking Bread
Person Nakamura
LET'S PUT IT TO A VOTE.
...OR "PROBABLY A MIRAGE" ...
"BAKING BREAD" ...
WHICHEVER TITLE GETS MORE VOTES WILL BE OUR HONORABLE MENTION.


HERE ...
Swup
FIRST, HANDS UP FOR "BAKING BREAD."
MM-MM ...
Which one...?
Swup
HERE ...
Swup
Swup

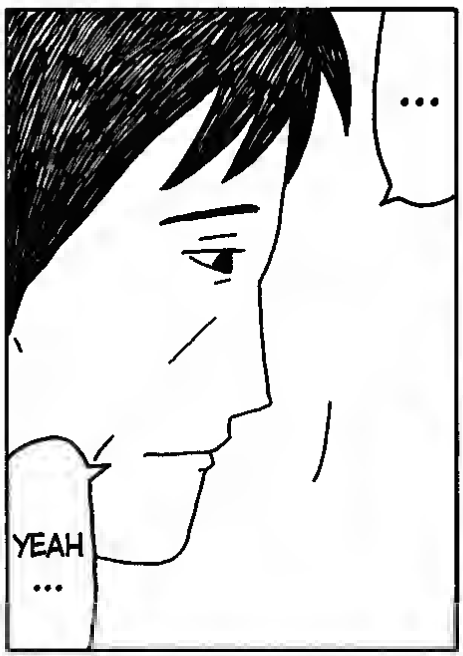


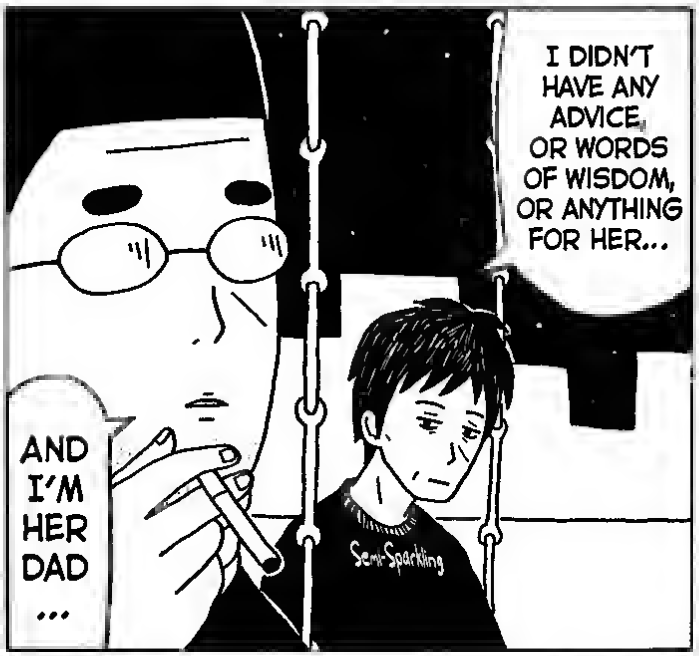

I KNOW.
...

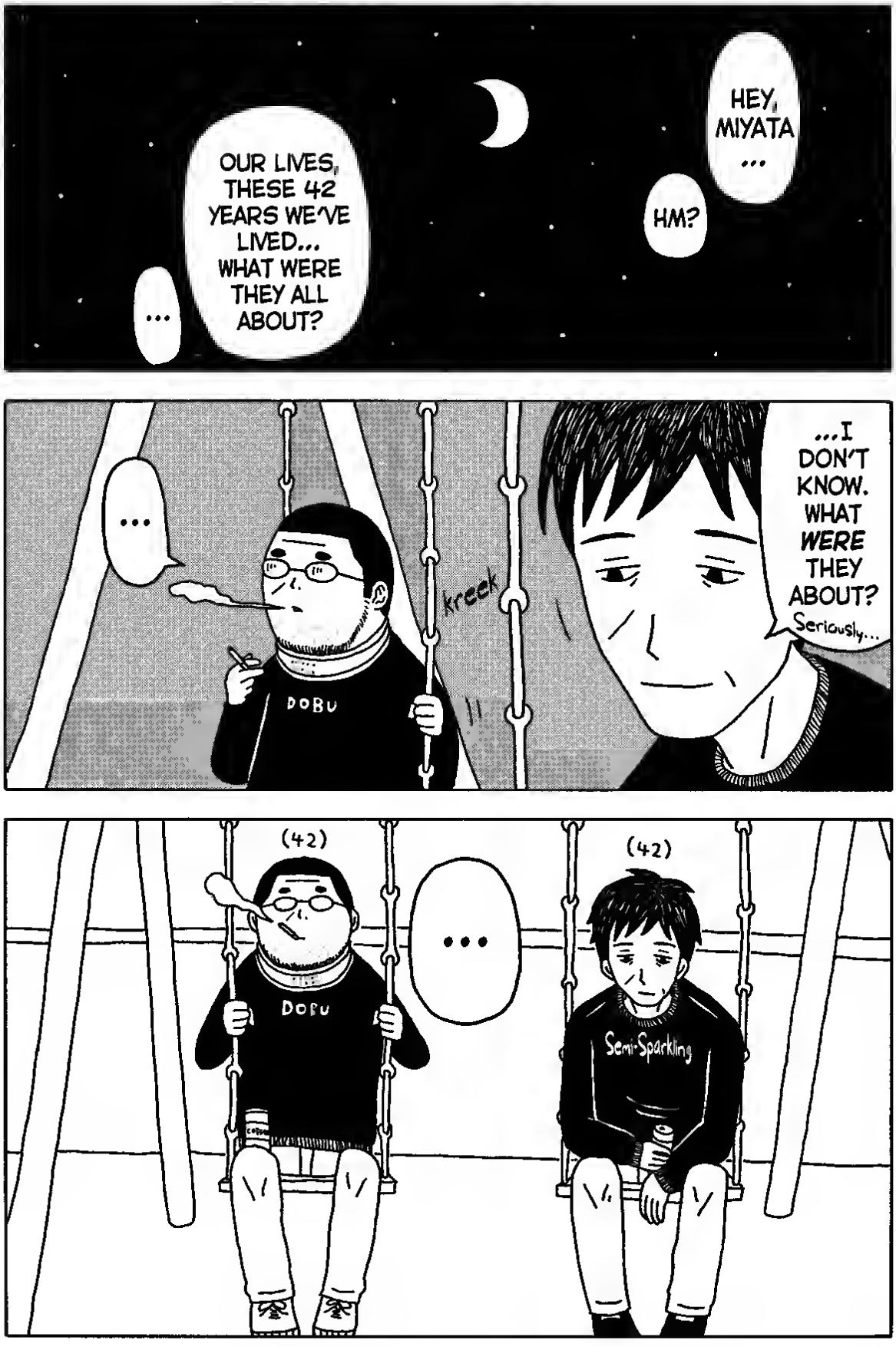

SHIZUO
...
Semi-Sparkling
Shuffle
Shuffle


MIYATA
...
...
HM?

HERE
...
Have some coffee.
COFFEE
THANKS
...

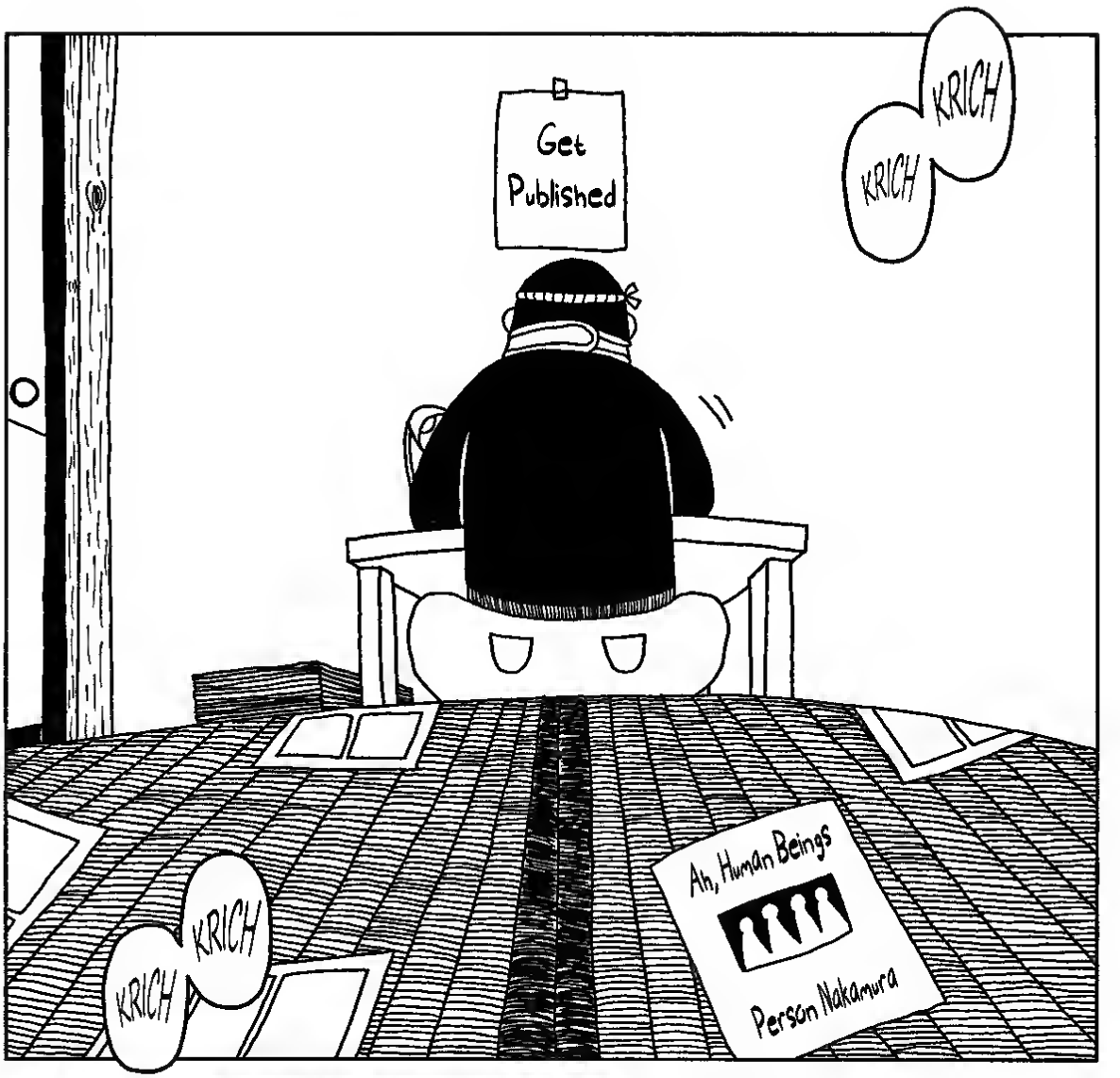

...
YEAH
...


I DIDN'T HAVE ANY ADVICE, OR WORDS OF WISDOM, OR ANYTHING FOR HER...
AND I'M HER DAD
...
Semi-Sparkling

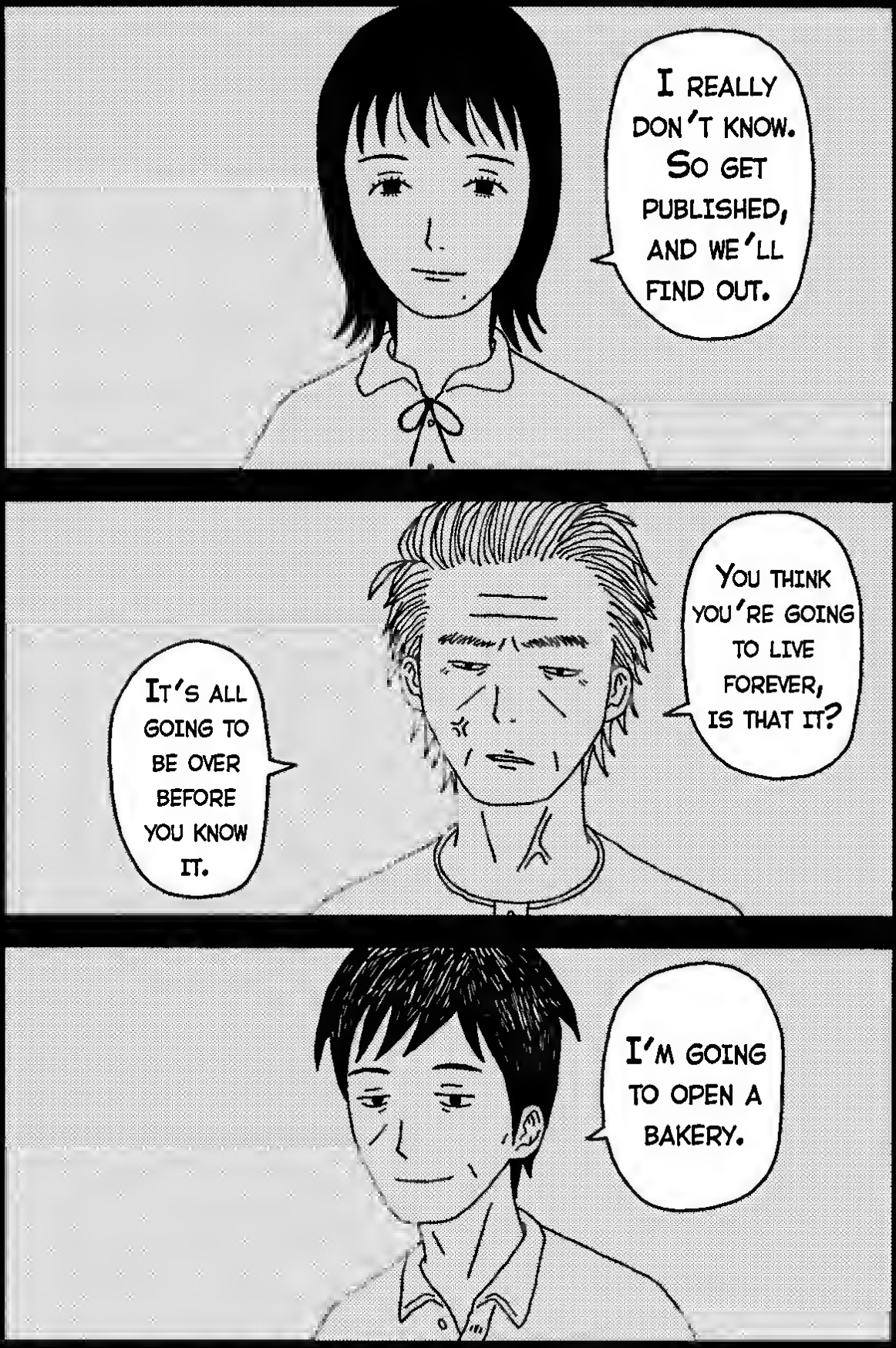

HEY, MIYATA ...
HM?
OUR LIVES, THESE 42 YEARS WE'VE LIVED... WHAT WERE THEY ALL ABOUT?
...
...I DON'T KNOW. WHAT *WERE* THEY ABOUT? Seriously...
kreek
DOBU
(42)
(42)
...
DOBU
Semi-Sparkling

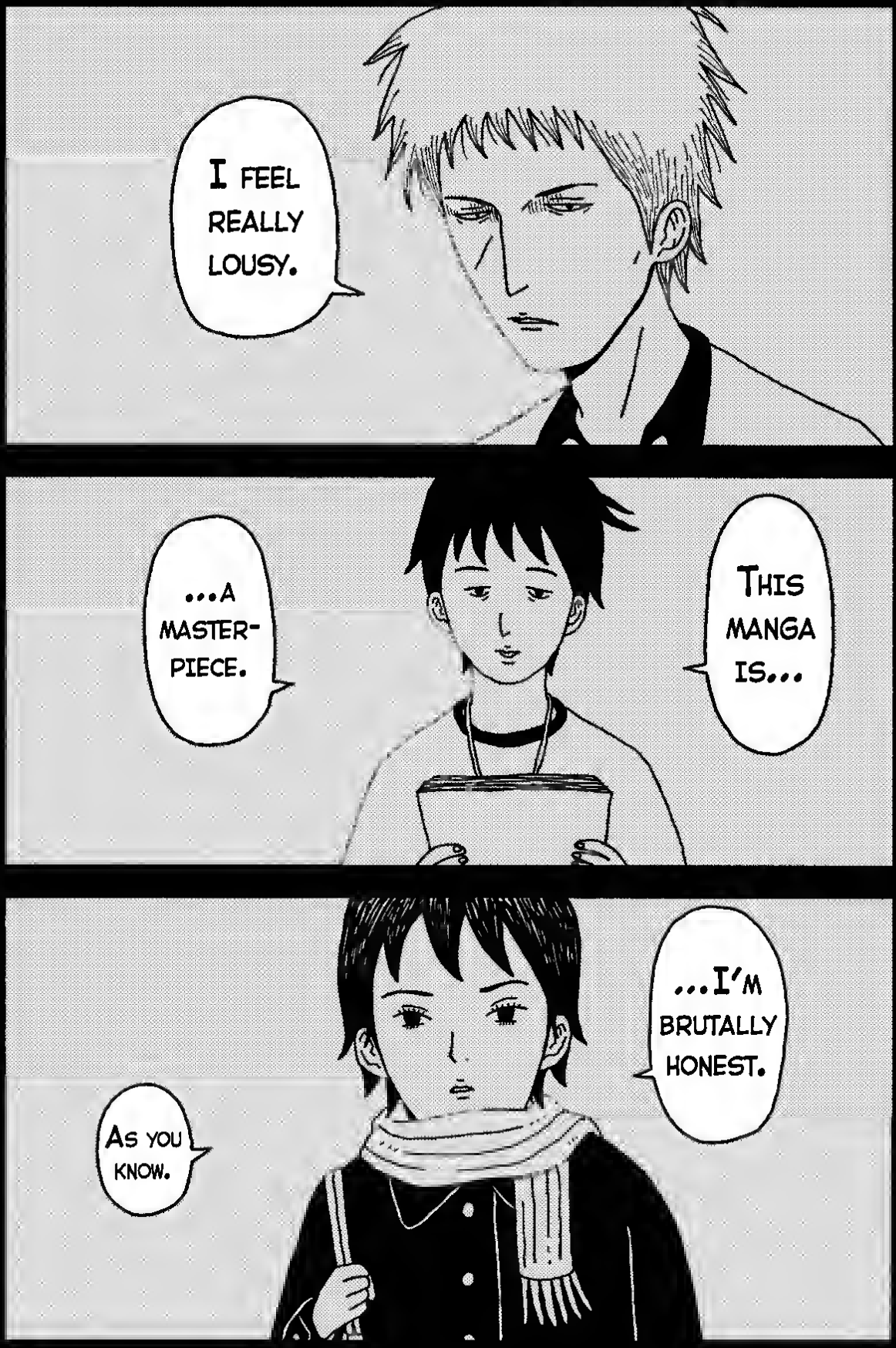
HEY, WASN'T TODAY THE DAY THEY DECIDED THOSE MANGA AWARDS?
Semi-Sparkling
YEAH... I'LL FIND OUT TOMORROW ...
kreek
YEAH ...
I MEAN, THAT'S IT...
I REALLY HOPE IT HAPPENS ...
PUBLI-CATION ...
ME DRAWING MANGA... YOU BAKING BREAD...
THAT'S OUR LIVES, RIGHT NOW...
YEAH ...
YOU'RE RIGHT ...
LMGH ...
THINK I'LL GO HOME AND DRAW SOME MANGA, THEN!
YEAH ...
Everybody's Park

ZZZ
ZZZ
A
B
KRICH
KRICH
SHI-
ZUO
mumble
mumble
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ


Get Published
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
Ah, Human Beings
Person Nakamura

KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
...
...


I REALLY DON'T KNOW. SO GET PUBLISHED, AND WE'LL FIND OUT.
YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE FOREVER, IS THAT IT?
IT'S ALL GOING TO BE OVER BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
I'M GOING TO OPEN A BAKERY.


I FEEL REALLY LOUSY.
THIS MANGA IS...
...A MASTER-PIECE.
...I'M BRUTALLY HONEST.
AS YOU KNOW.

Human beings…
Get Published
Ah…
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
They're such a hassle…

...are such a hassle...
I mean it. People...
DOBU

Like you can talk!
mumble mumble

(14)

Final Chapter:
Suzuko—Part 1

That's my mother's name… Akari…

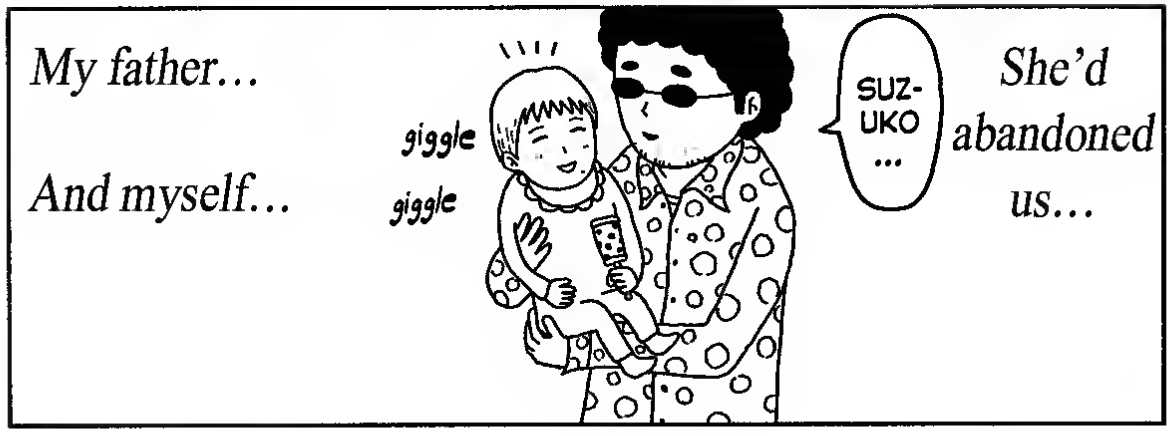
Bar
President's Office
Izakaya
Yakitori Shiro
Shiro
She was working as a hostess at a little bar next door to my grandfather's yakitori place.

Day after day, he came to the bar to ask her out.
HOW ABOUT WE START OUT AS JUST FRIENDS?
(24)
AKARI-SAN!
My father fell in love with her at first sight.

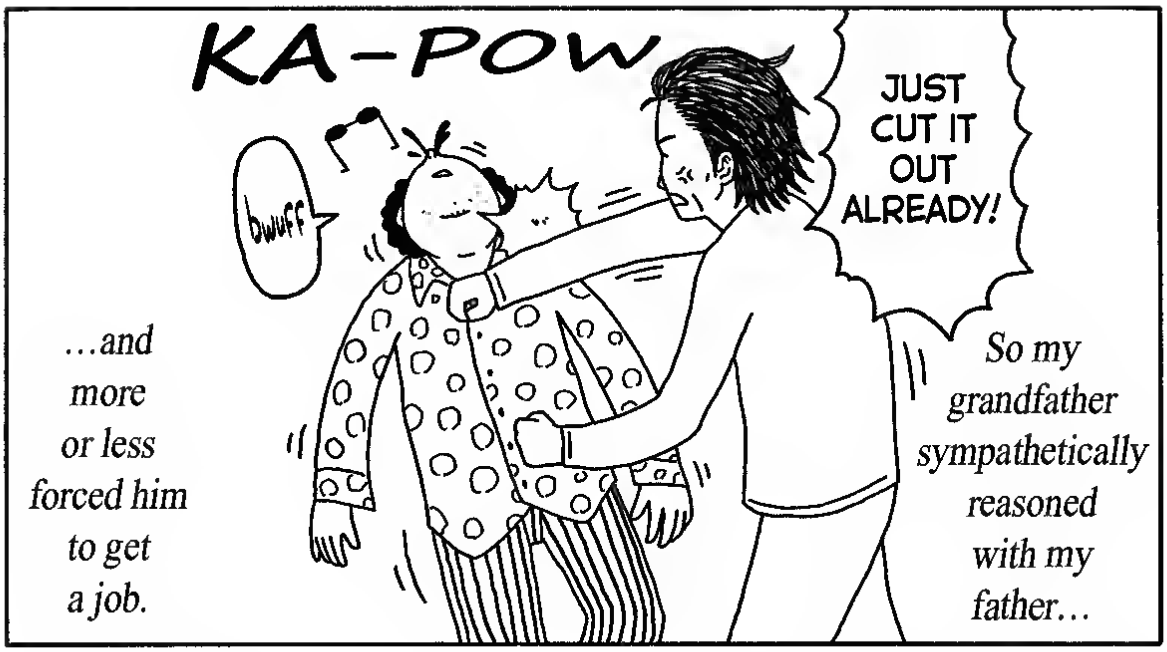
She became pregnant with me almost right away, and they got married.
HEY, IT JUST MOVED!
My mother alone knows the reason...
Why she finally agreed to start seeing him is a mystery...

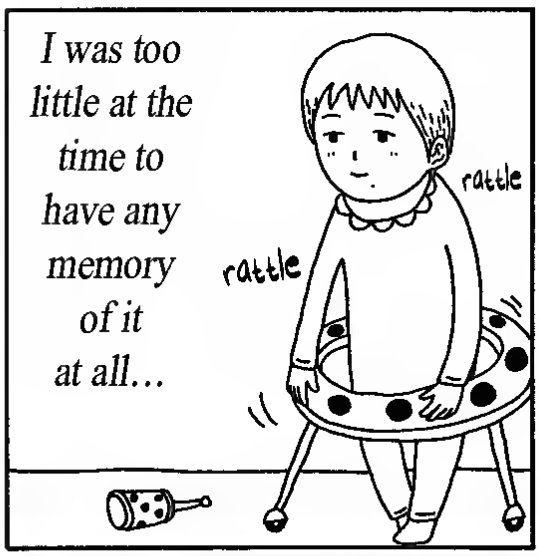
My mother simply left...
Not even my grandfather knew where she'd gone...

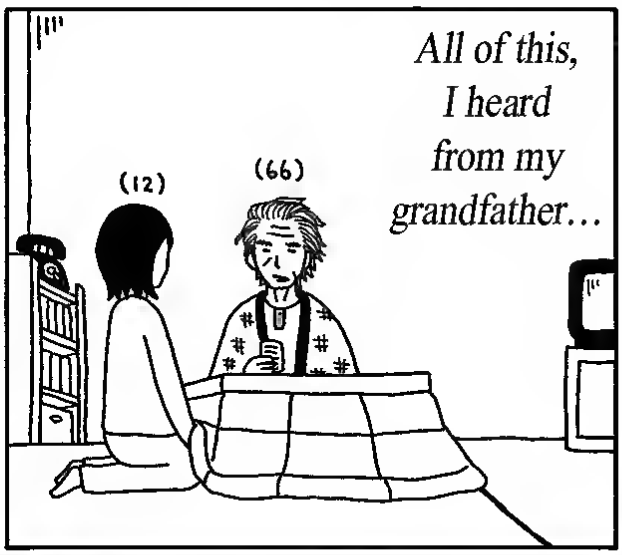
Nobody knew why...
But my mother left as soon as she'd given birth to me...
DIVORCE NOTICE
DATE:
NAME:
HUSBAND:

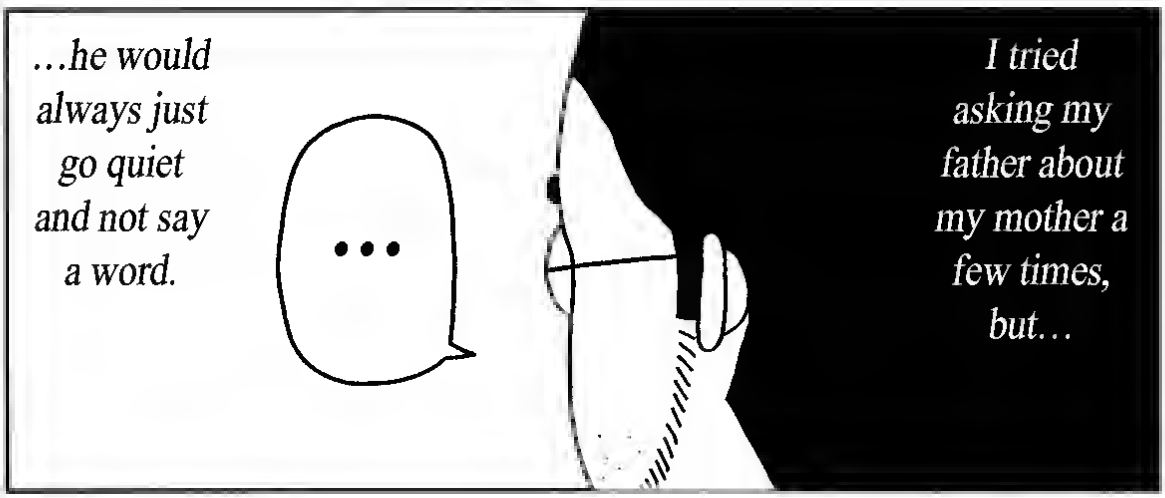

My father...
And myself...
giggle
giggle
SUZ-UKO ...
She'd abandoned us...

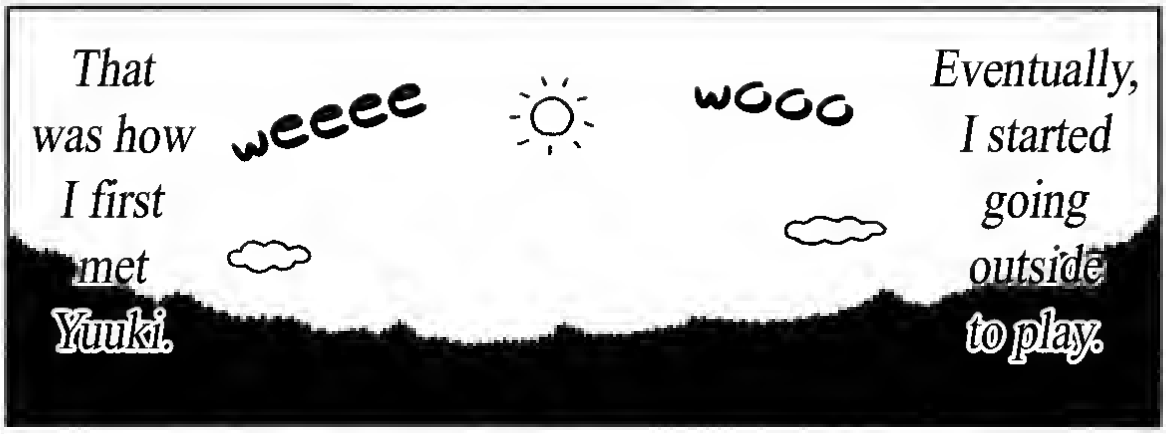
AKARIIIII!
...my father ran around the neighbor-hood, looking for her and screaming her name...
AKA-RIIII!
AKA-RIIII!
For a while after my mother left us...
(54) The phone in my grandfather's izakaya never stopped ringing as a result...
I'M VERY SORRY...
Yakitori
Shiro
AKA-RIIII!
AKA-RIIII!
tak
tak
tak
AKA-RIIII!
...
...

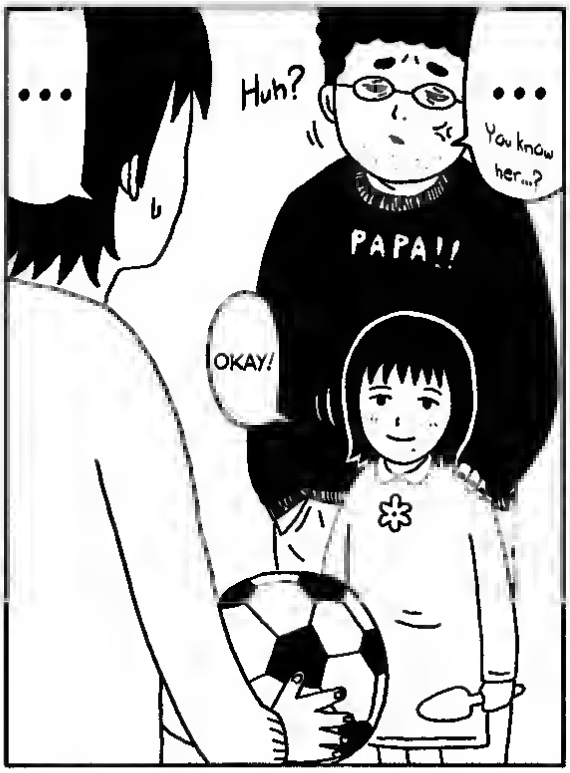

KA-POW
bwuff
JUST CUT IT OUT ALREADY!
...and more or less forced him to get a job.
So my grandfather sympathetically reasoned with my father...


I was too little at the time to have any memory of it at all...
rattle
rattle

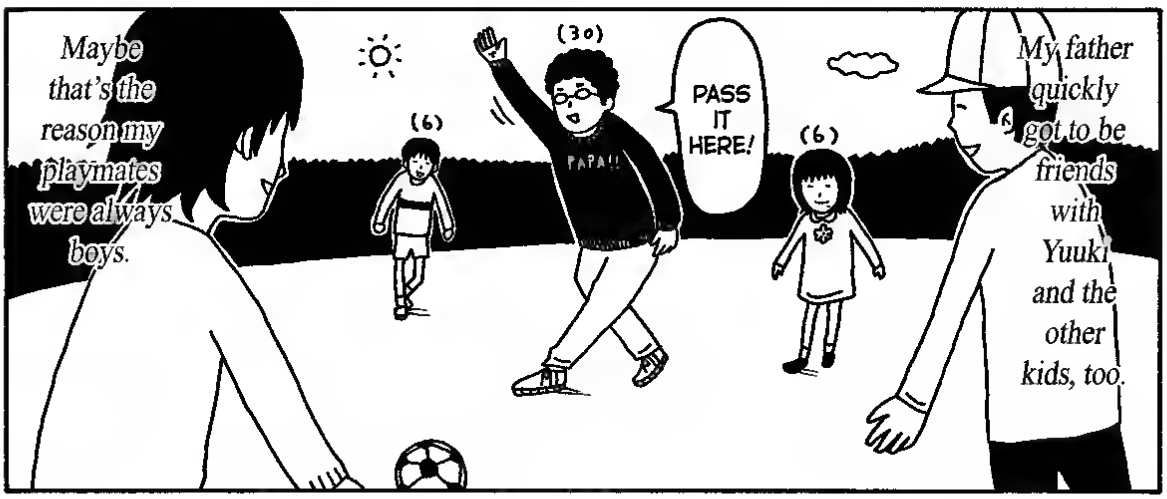

All of this, I heard from my grandfather...
(12)
(66)

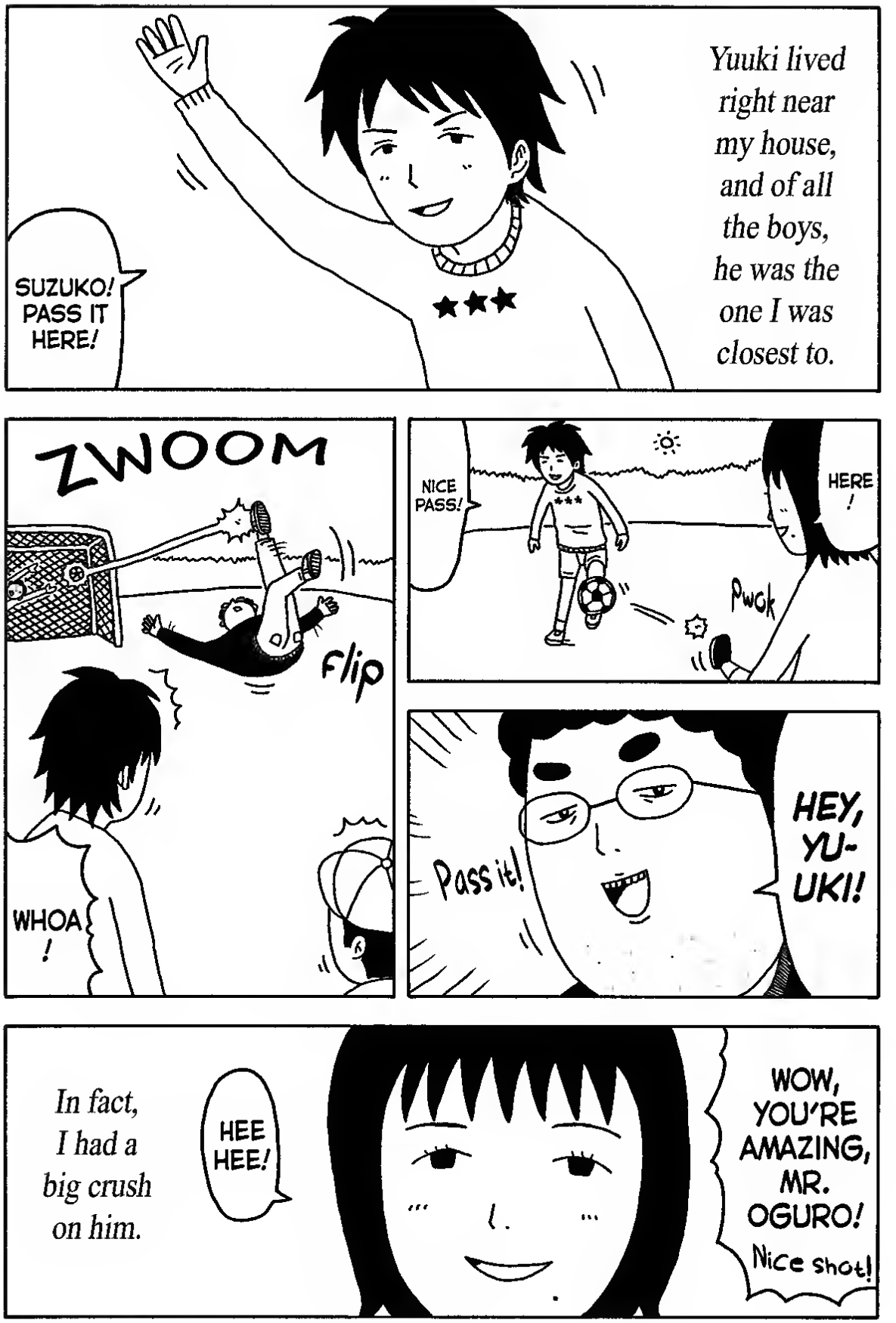

...he would always just go quiet and not say a word.
...
I tried asking my father about my mother a few times, but...


That was how I first met Yuuki.
weeee
wooo
Eventually, I started going outside to play.

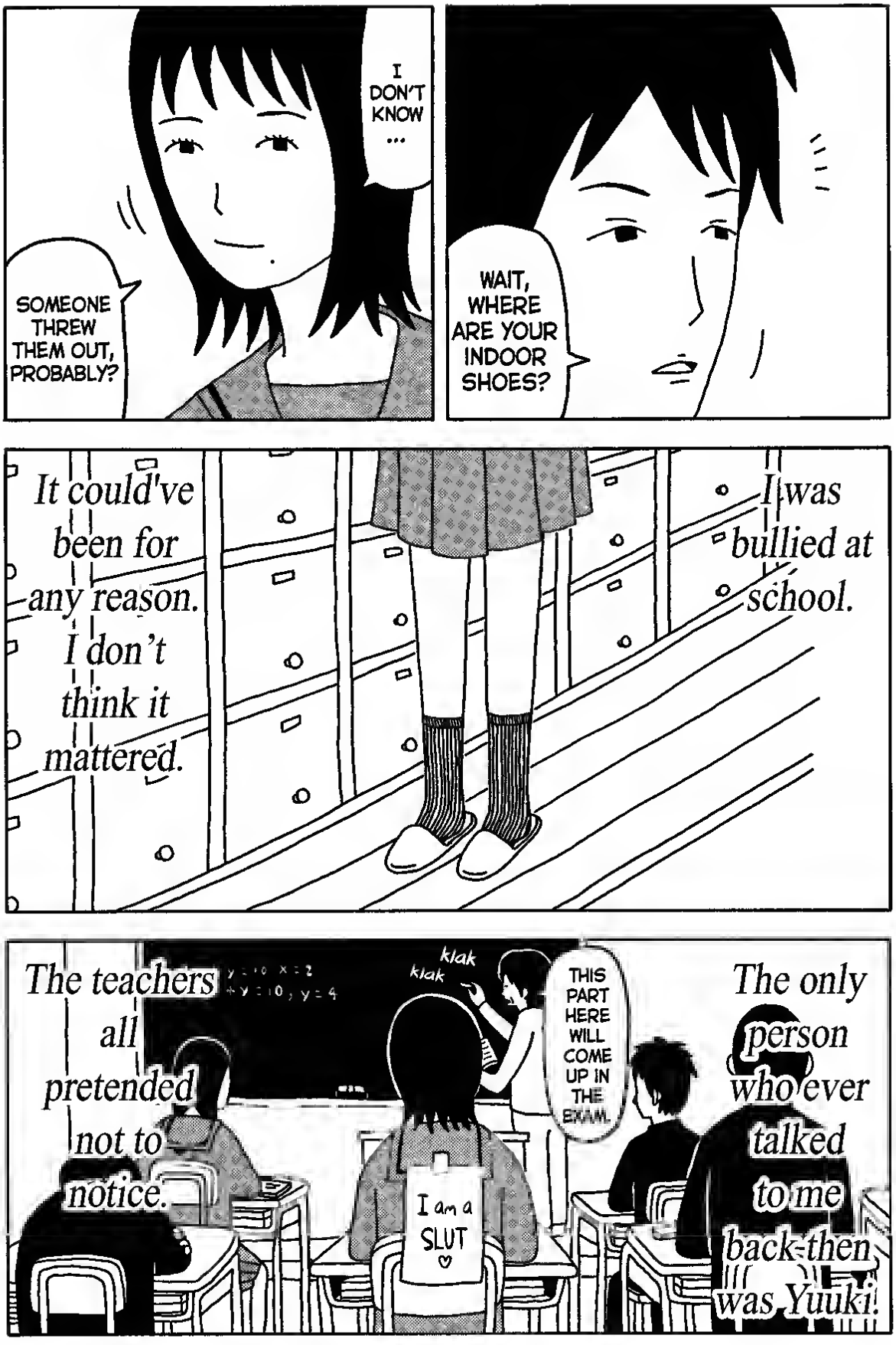

...
Huh?
...
You know her...?
PAPA!!
OKAY!

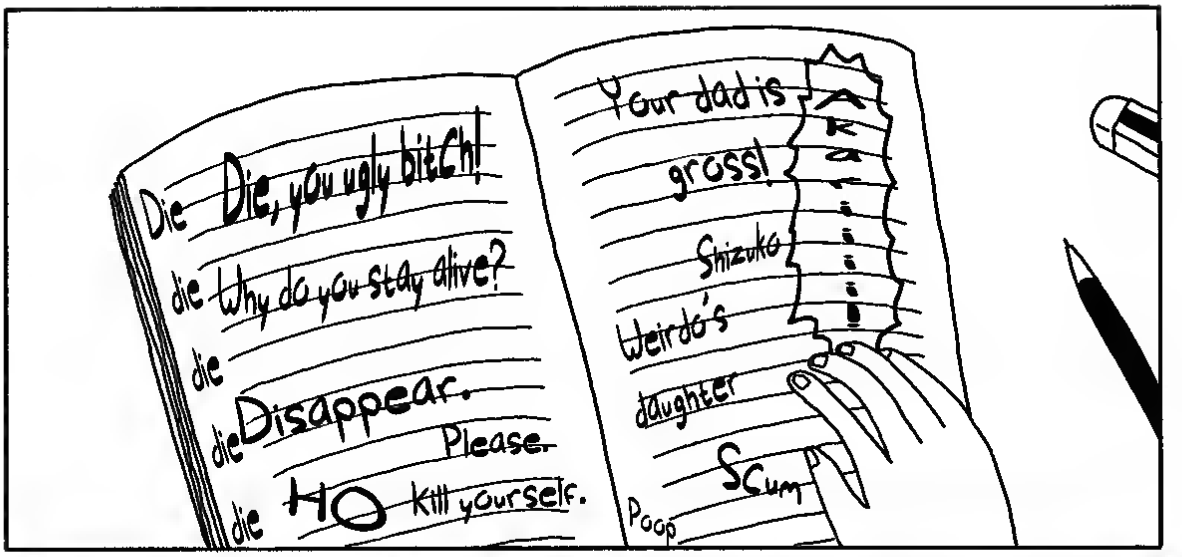
(6)
SUZU-KO!
COME PLAY WITH US!
MVP

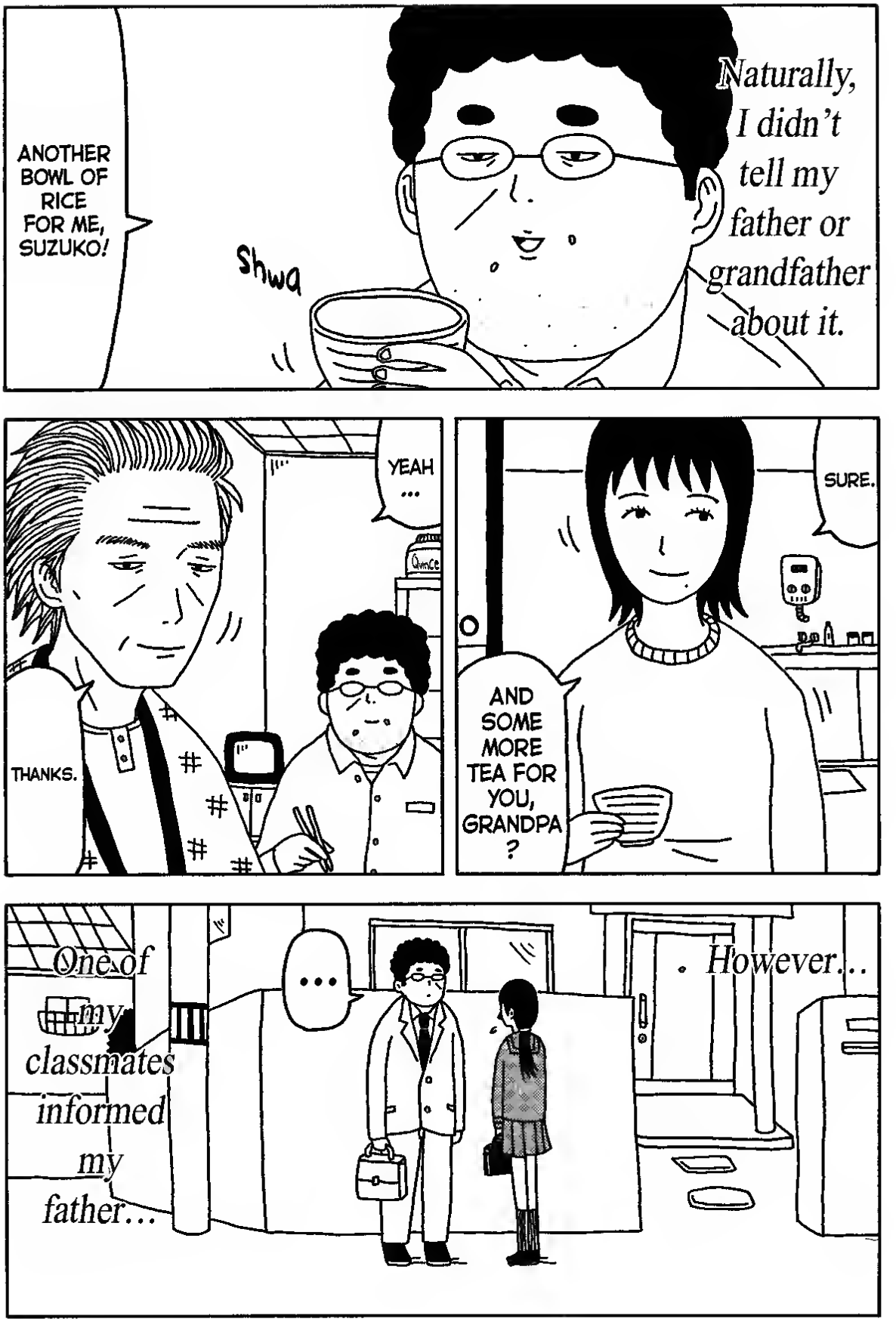

Maybe that's the reason my playmates were always boys.
(6)
(30)
PAPA!!
PASS IT HERE!
(6)
My father quickly got to be friends with Yuuki and the other kids, too.

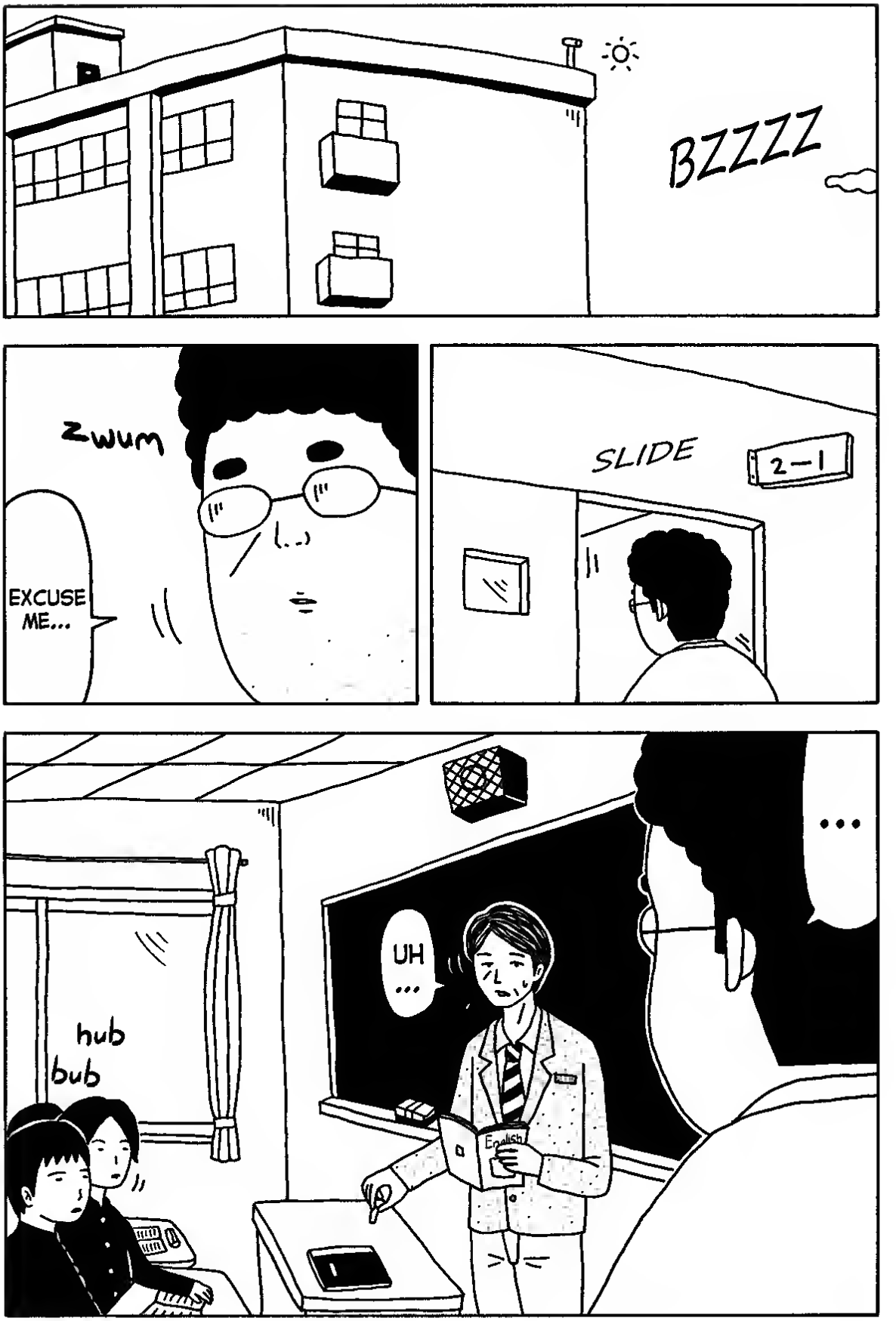

SUZUKO! PASS IT HERE!
Yuuki lived right near my house, and of all the boys, he was the one I was closest to.
ZWOOM
flip
WHOA!
NICE PASS!
HERE!
Pwok
Pass it!
HEY, YU-UKI!
In fact, I had a big crush on him.
HEE HEE!
WOW, YOU'RE AMAZING, MR. OGURO!
Nice shot!

(14)
SUZUKO!
OH, HI, YUUKI.
SUZUKO... YOU ARE SO CLUELESS ...
YOU'RE WALKING AROUND WITH A NOTE TAPED TO YOUR BACK... AGAIN...
...
I am a SLUT ♡
WHY DON'T YOU EVER NOTICE?
...I DID NOTICE.
MAN, THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL ... Jeez...
IF I TAKE IT OFF, THEY'LL JUST DO IT AGAIN...

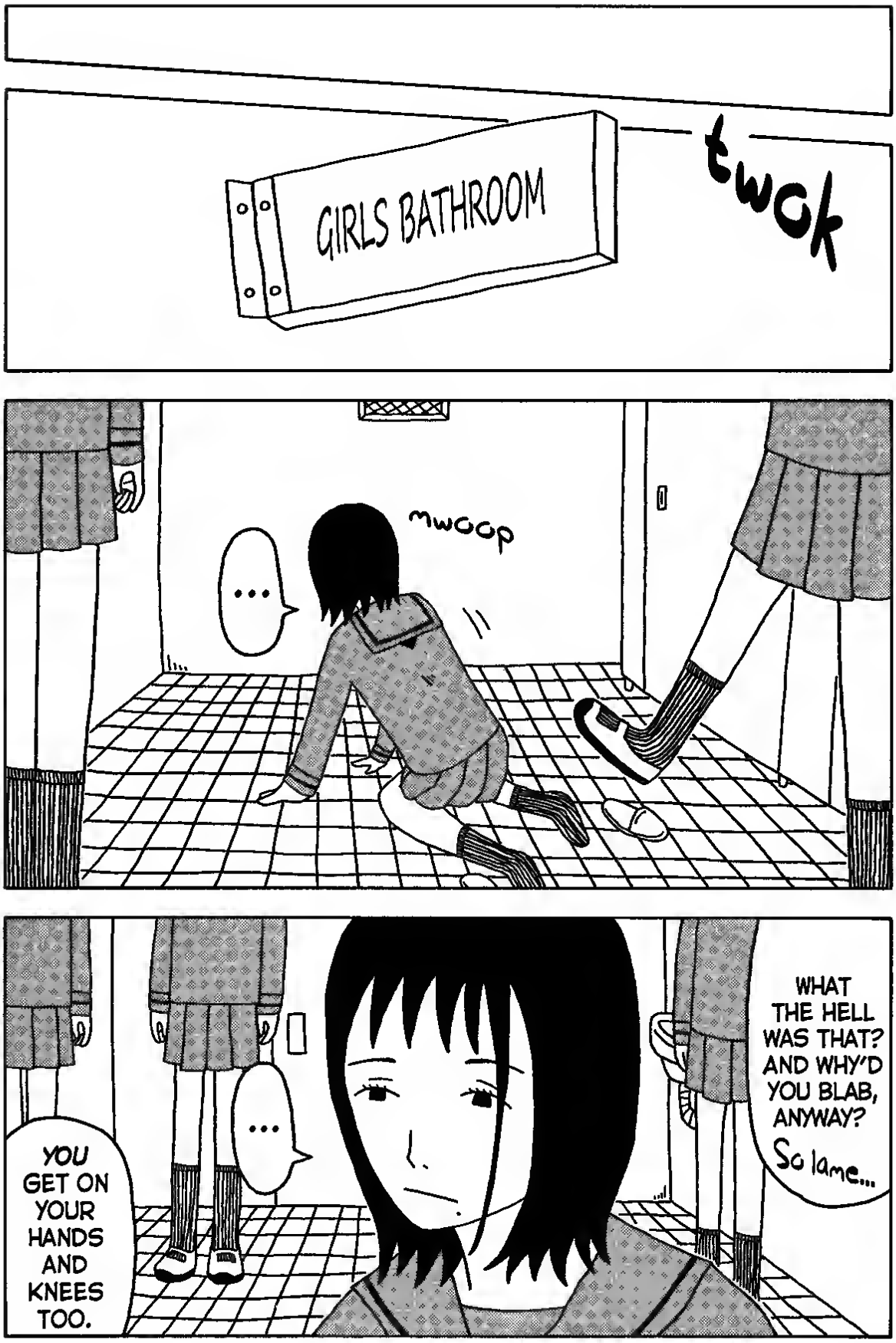

I DON'T KNOW ...
SOMEONE THREW THEM OUT, PROBABLY?
WAIT, WHERE ARE YOUR INDOOR SHOES?
It could've been for any reason. I don't think it mattered.
I was bullied at school.
The teachers all pretended not to notice.
kiak
kiak
THIS PART HERE WILL COME UP IN THE EXAM.
I am a SLUT ♡
The only person who ever talked to me back then was Yuuki.

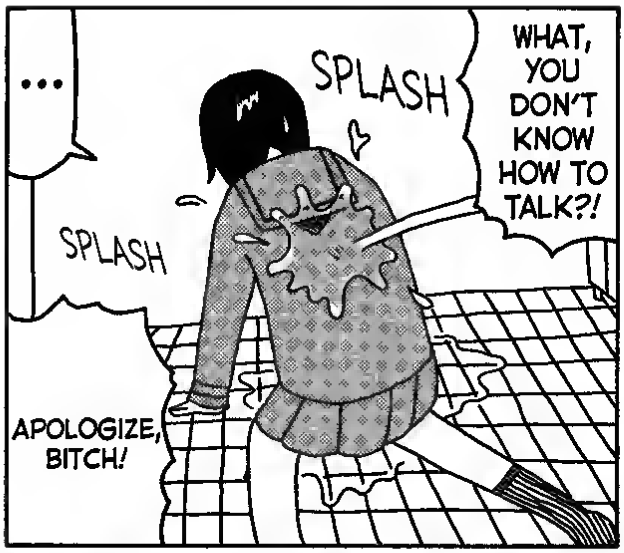

Die Die, you ugly bitch!
die Why do you stay alive?
die
die Disappear.
Please
die NO kill yourself.
Your dad is
gross!
Shizuko
Weirdo's
daughter
Scum
Poop
AAAA

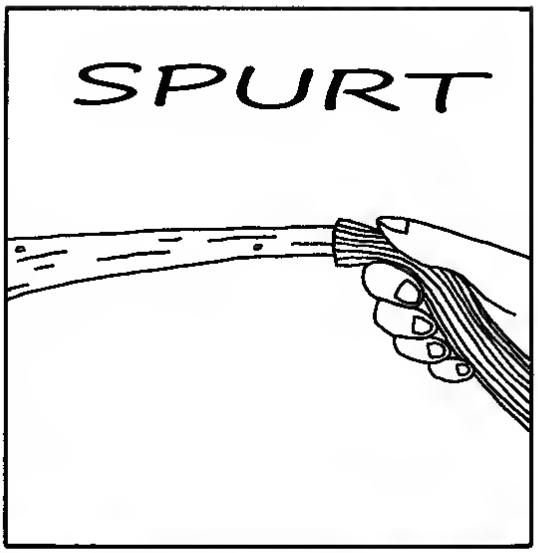

ANOTHER BOWL OF RICE FOR ME, SUZUKO!
Shwa
Naturally, I didn't tell my father or grandfather about it.
YEAH ...
THANKS.
SURE.
AND SOME MORE TEA FOR YOU, GRANDPA?
One of my classmates informed my father...
...
However...

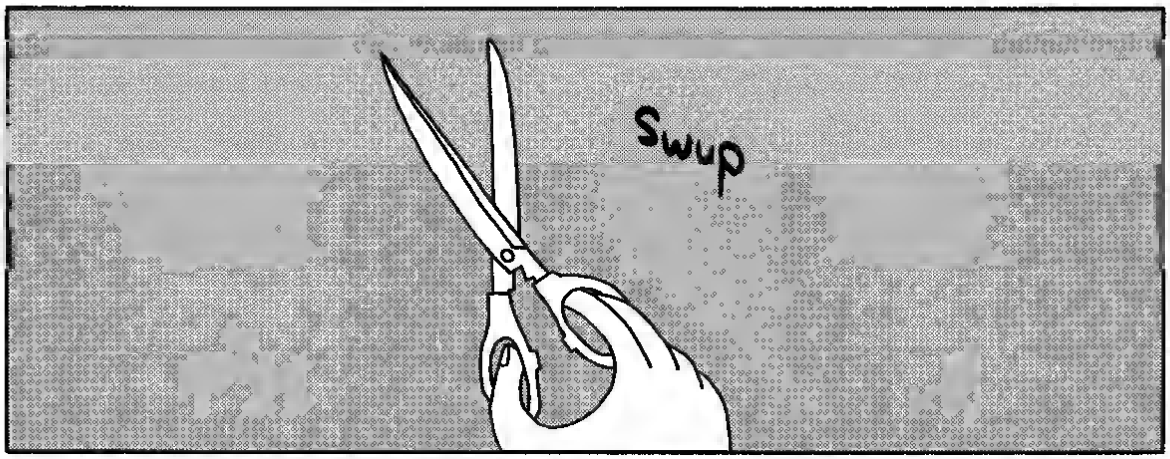

BZZZZ
zwum
EXCUSE ME...
SLIDE
2-1
hub bub
UH ...
English
...

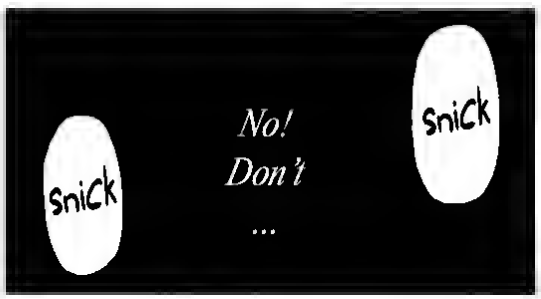
PLEASE, EVERYBODY ... BE NICE TO SUZUKO ...
bow
...I AM SUZUKO OGURO'S FATHER.
...
klatter
WHAT THE ...?
UM... MR. OGURO ...
Shup
silence
(14)
...
(38)
PLEASE BE HER FRIENDS.

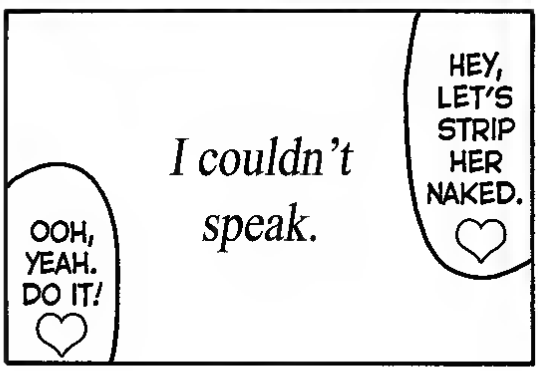

GIRLS BATHROOM
twok
mwoop
...
...
YOU GET ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES TOO.
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT? AND WHY'D YOU BLAB, ANYWAY?
So lame...

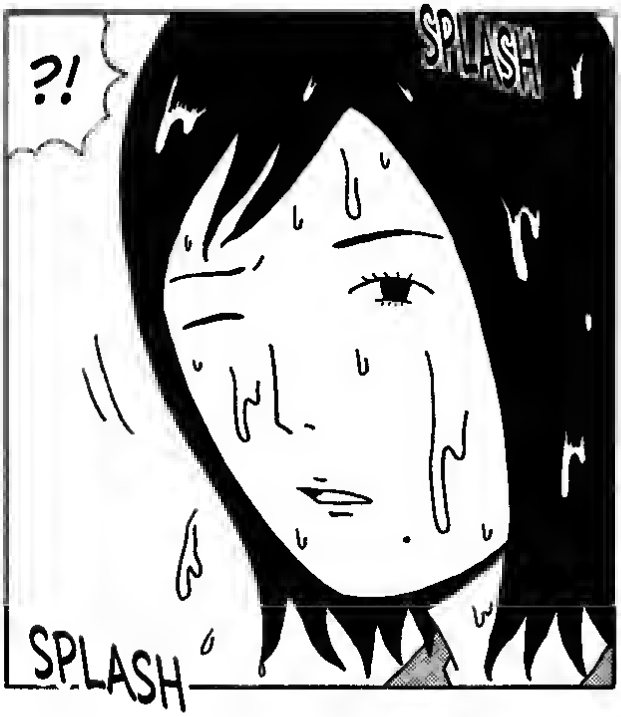

...
SPLASH
SPLASH
WHAT, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO TALK?!
APOLOGIZE, BITCH!


SPURT

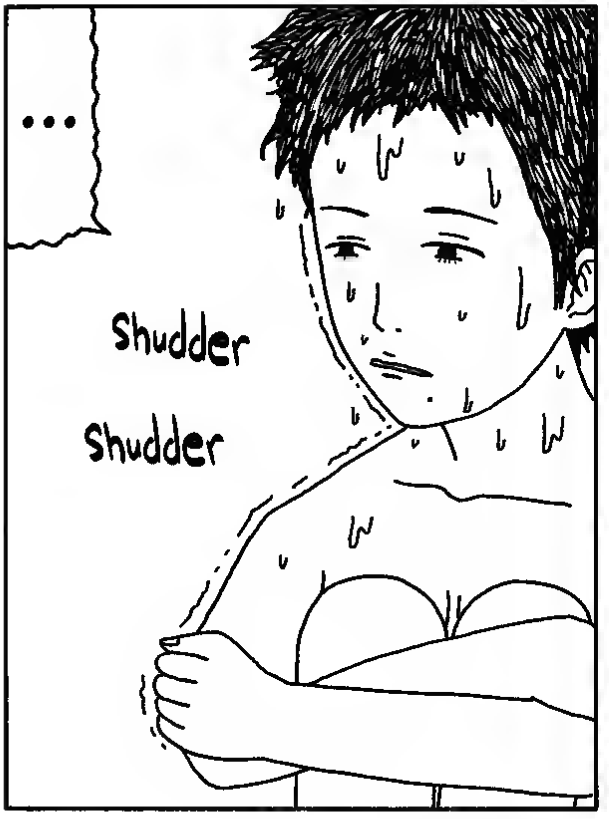

Swup

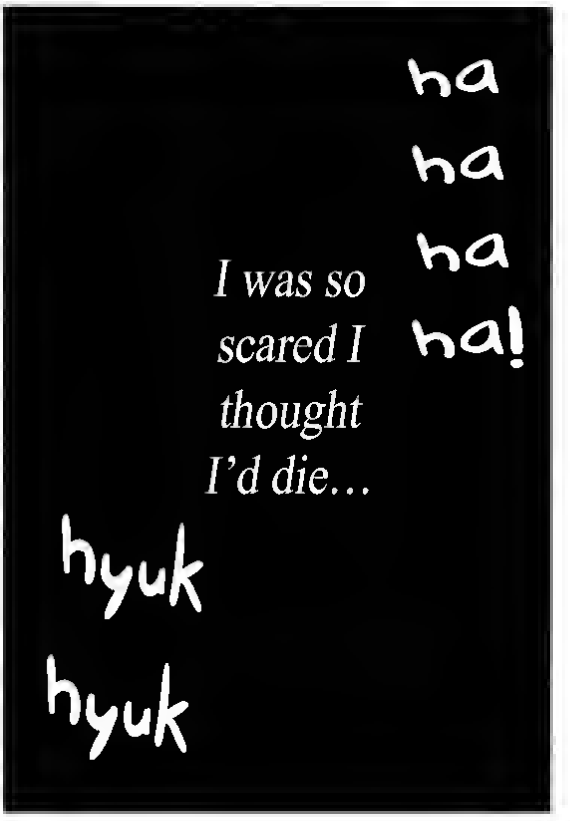

Snick
No! Don't ...
Snick

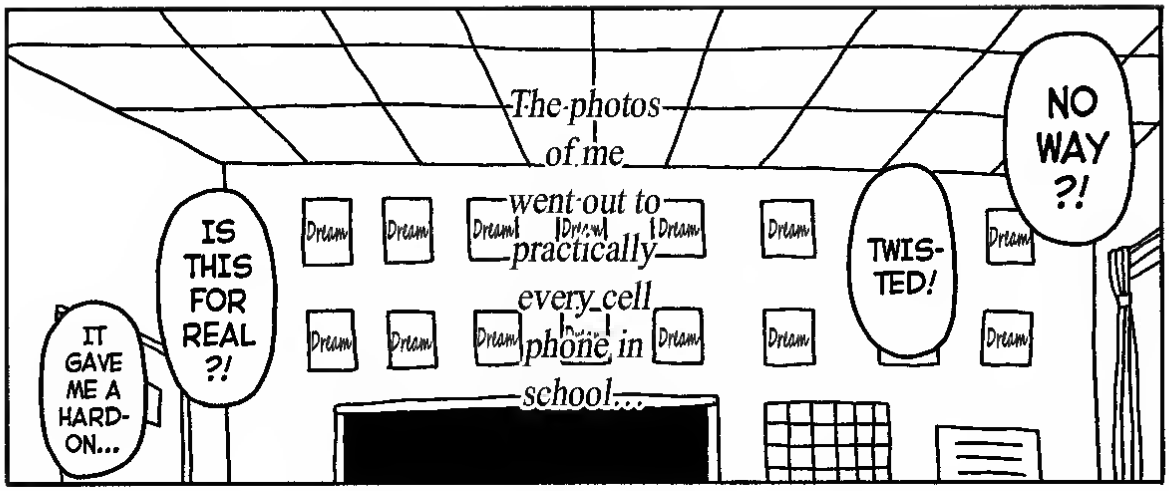

I couldn't speak.
HEY, LET'S STRIP HER NAKED.
OOH, YEAH. DO IT!

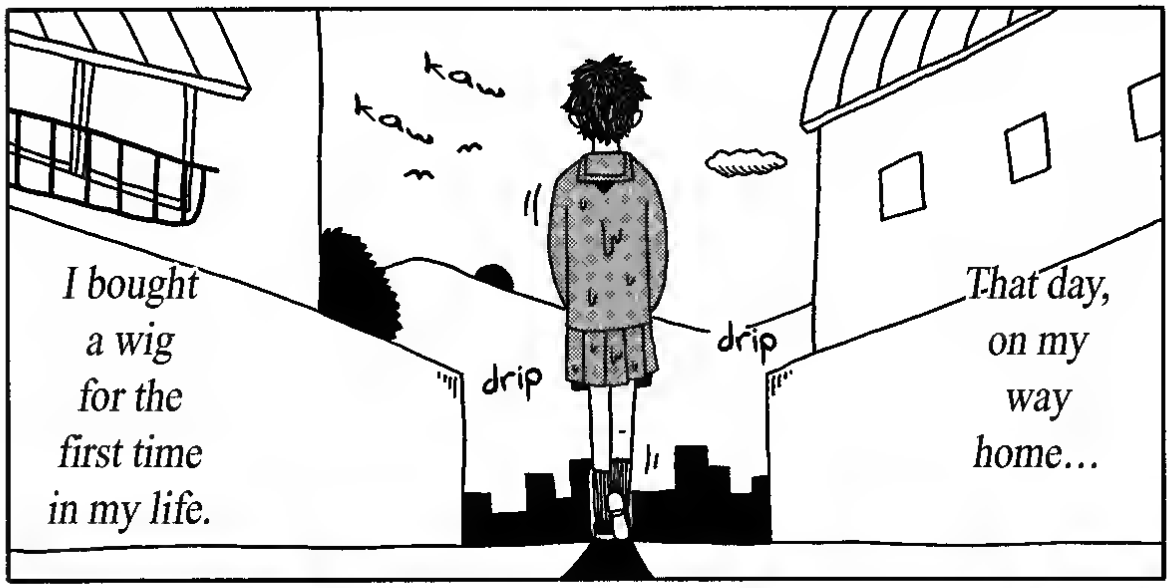

?!
SPLASH
SPLASH

KLIK
KLIK


...
Shudder
Shudder

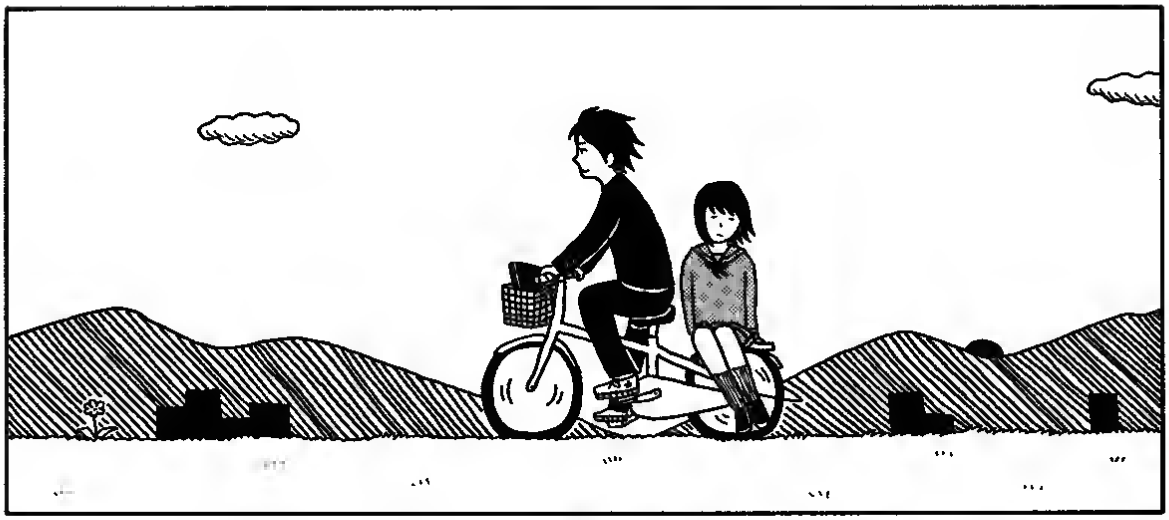

ha
ha
ha
ha!
I was so scared I thought I'd die...
hyuk
hyuk


The photos of me went out to practically every cell phone in school...
IS THIS FOR REAL ?!
IT GAVE ME A HARD-ON...
TWIS-TED!
NO WAY ?!
Dream

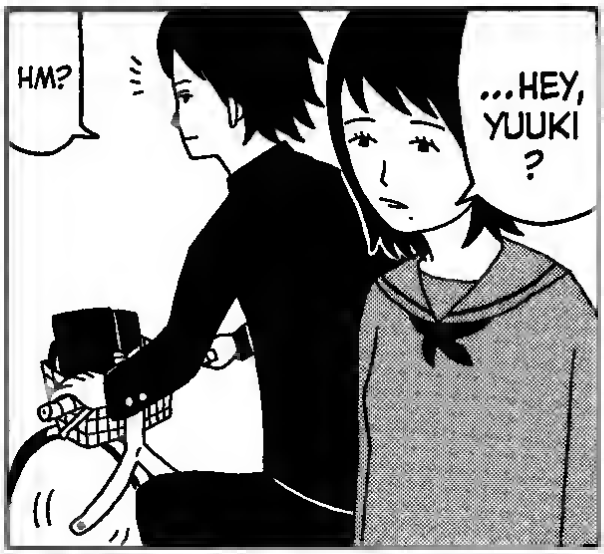

I bought a wig for the first time in my life.
kaw
kaw
drip
drip
That day, on my way home...

So that my father and grandfather wouldn't notice...
...

SUZUKO
!
A few days later...
I'LL TAKE YOU HOME ...
smile
...
WANT A RIDE?
On the back.
tump
tump
OKAY ...
...Is it okay?



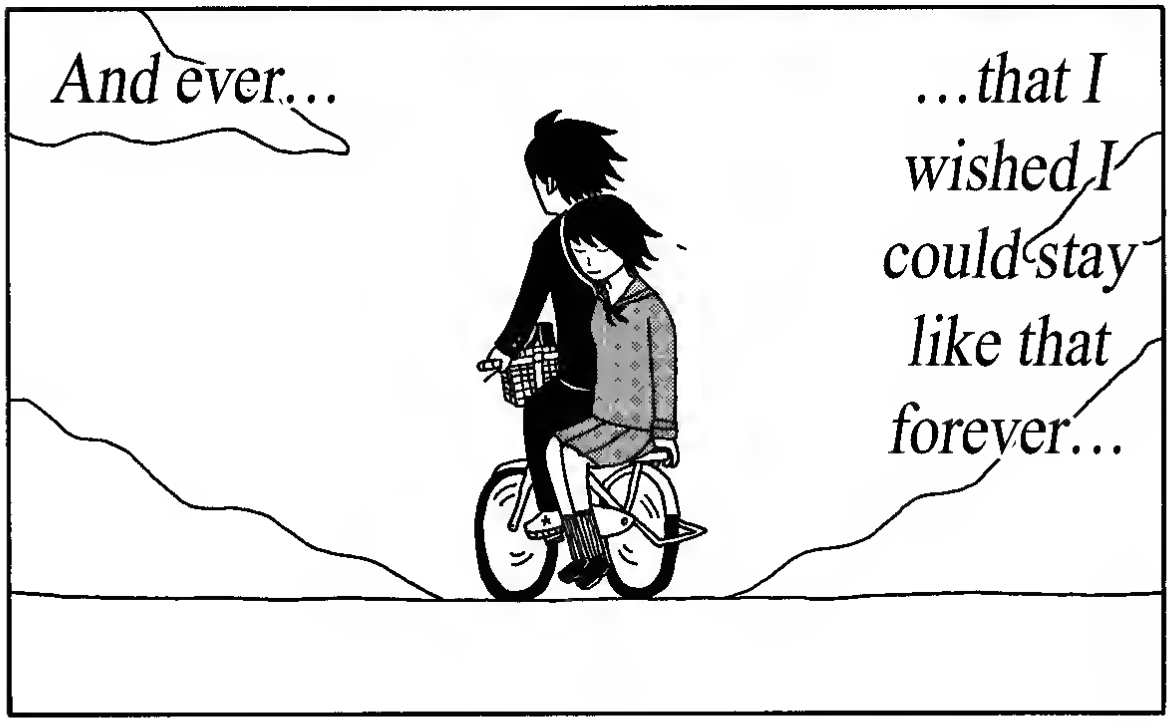
...DID YOU SEE THE PHOTOS?
kaw
kaw
...THEY GOT SENT TO MY PHONE, BUT I DELETED THEM RIGHT AWAY.

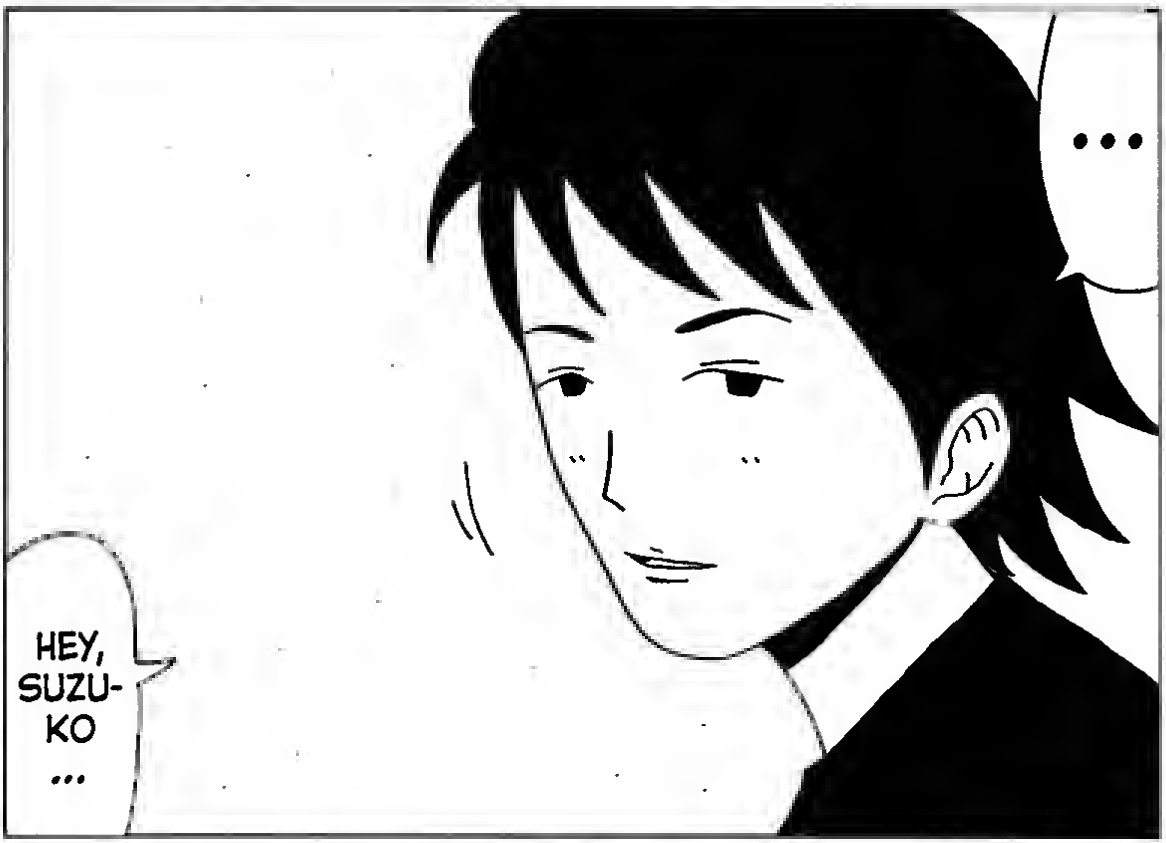

HM?
...HEY, YUUKI?

MAN... I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY DID THAT TO YOU...
...

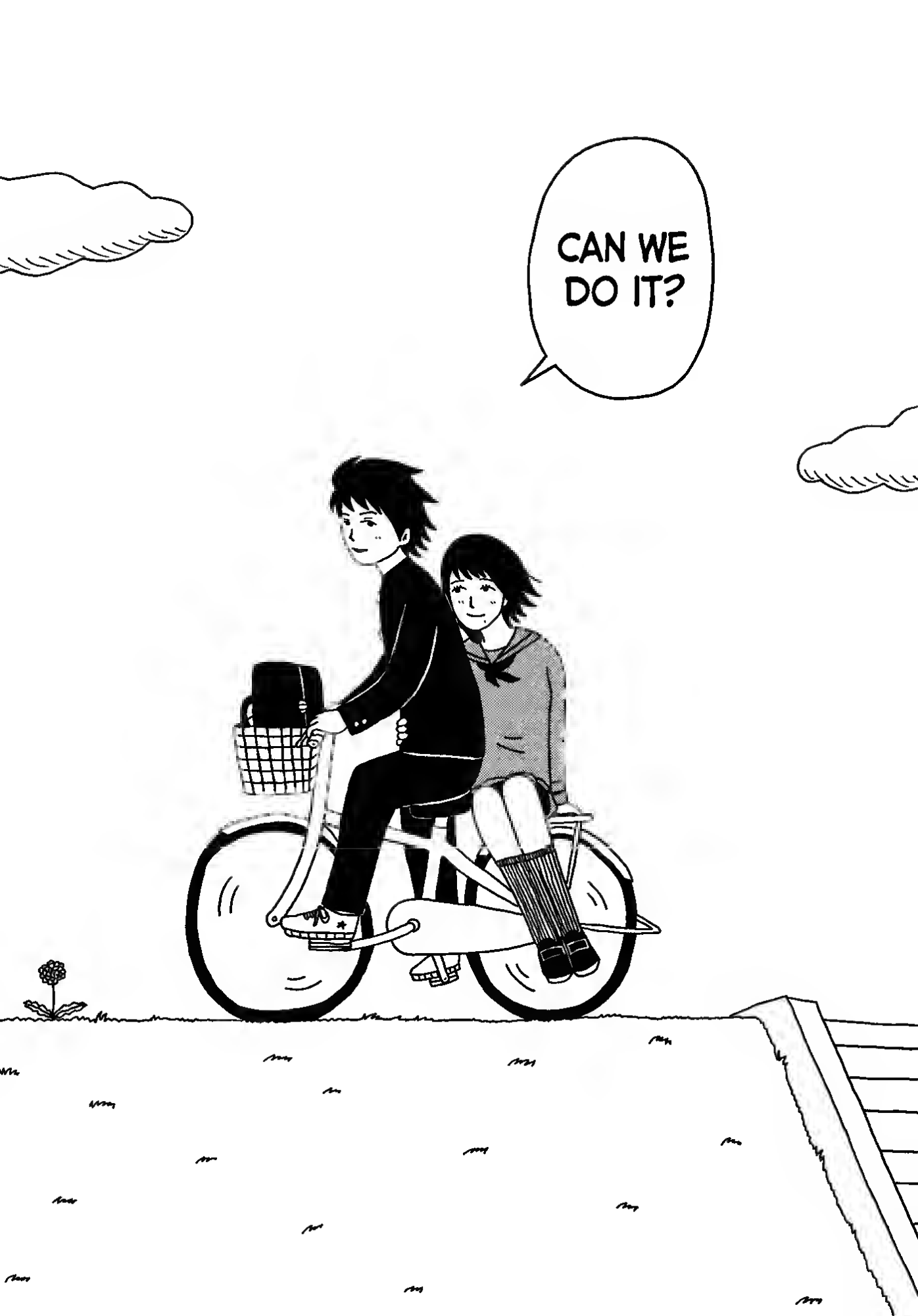
lean

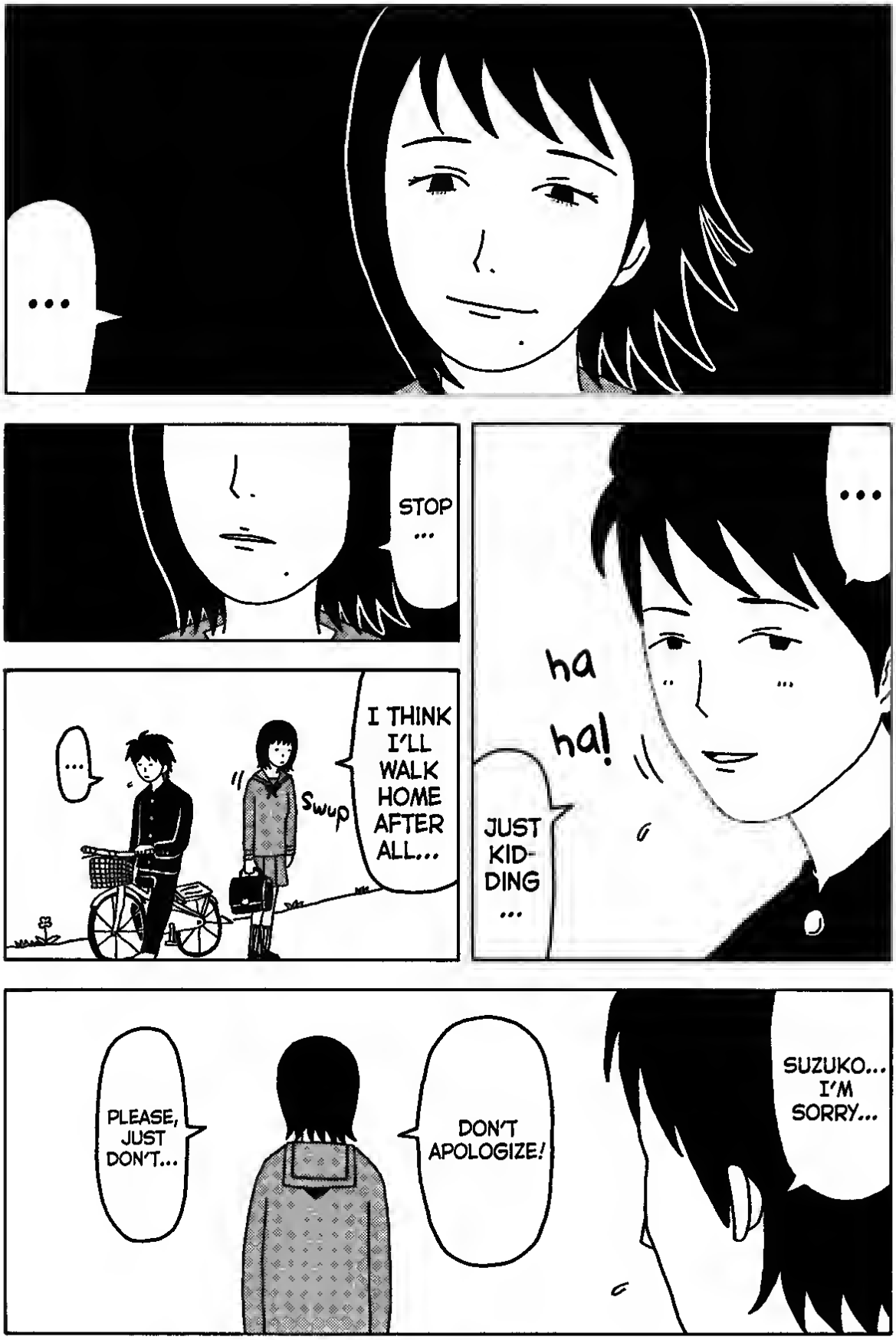
The wind…
The wind felt so good…

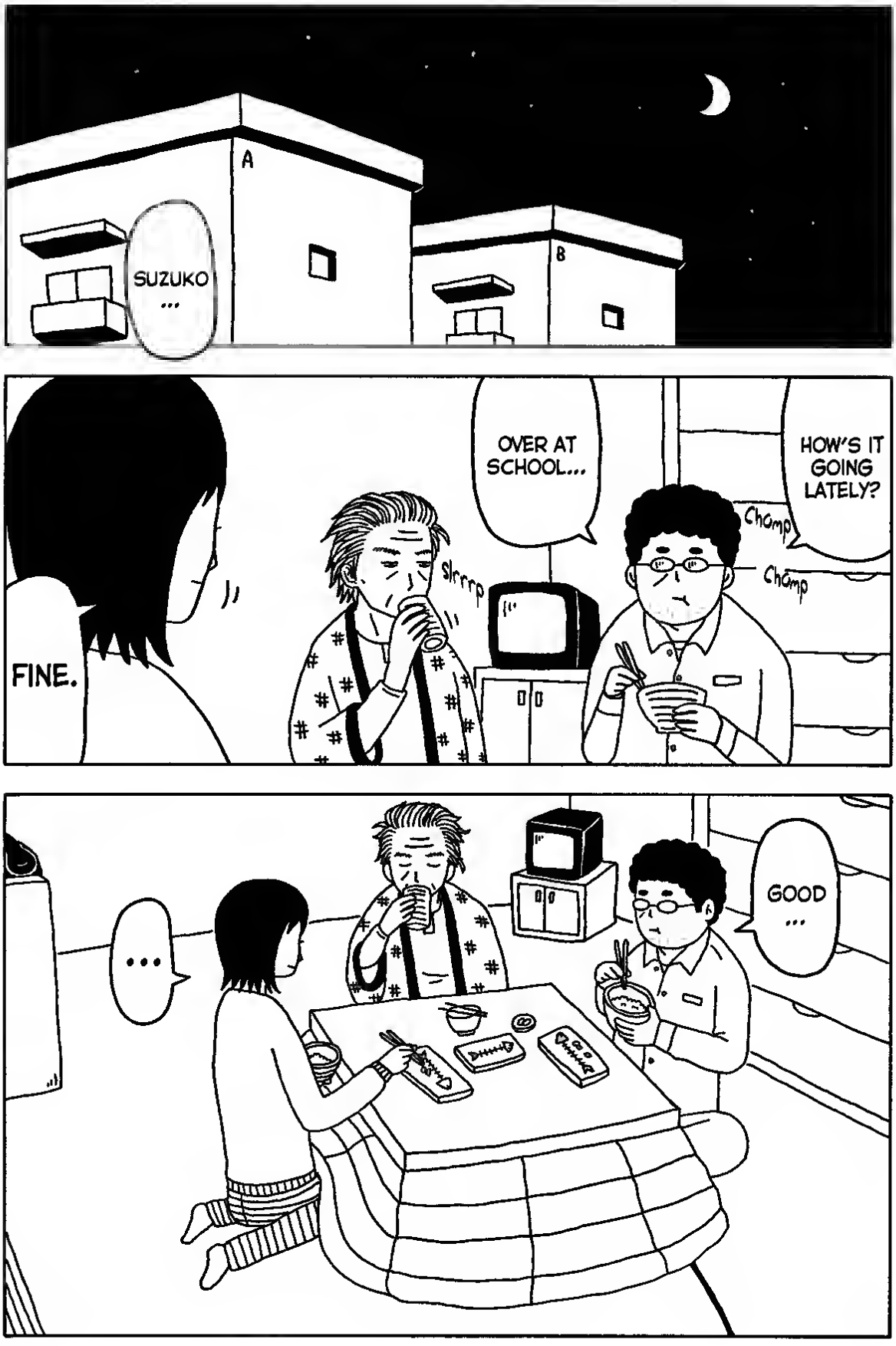

And ever…
…that I wished I could stay like that forever…

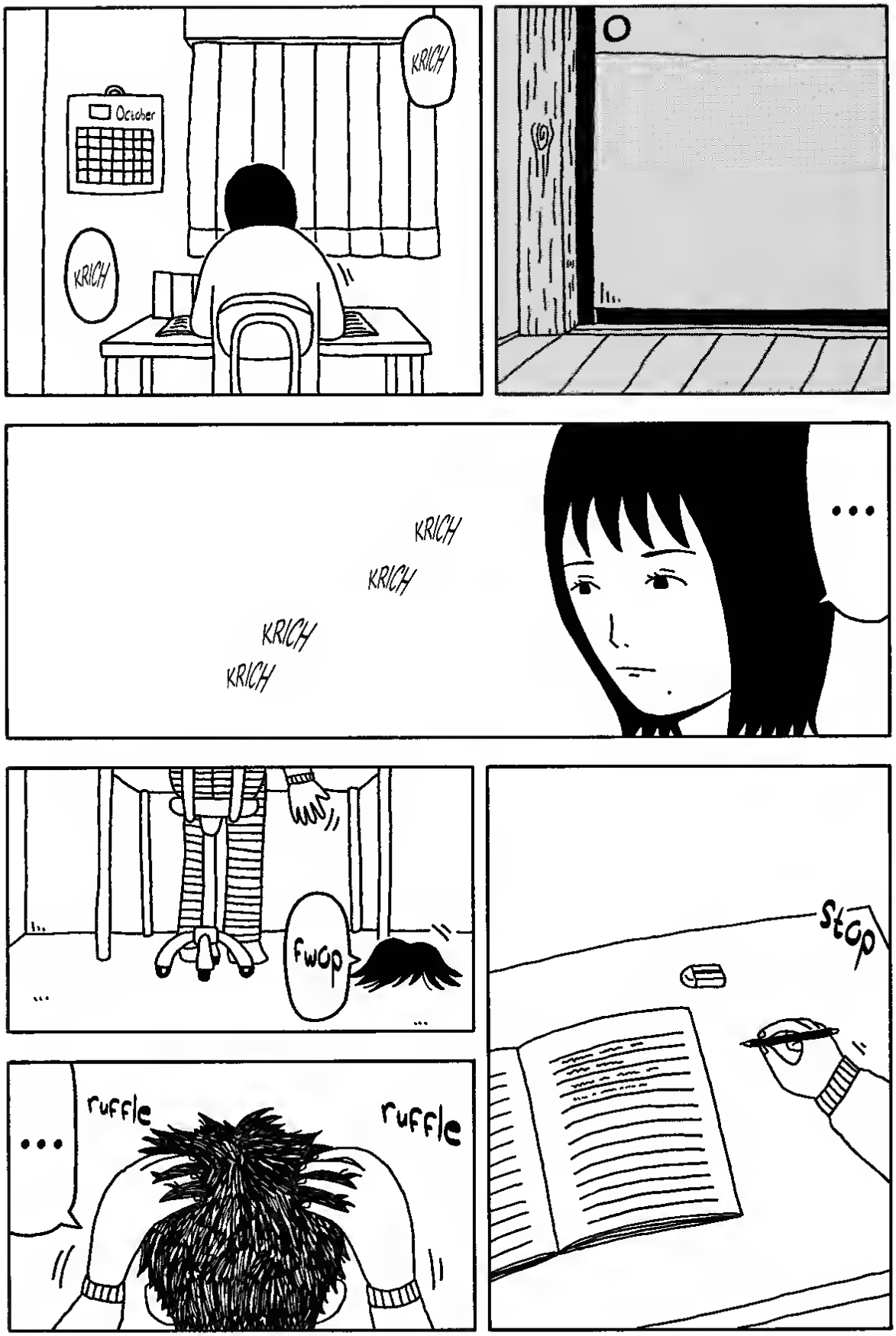

...
HEY, SUZU-KO ...

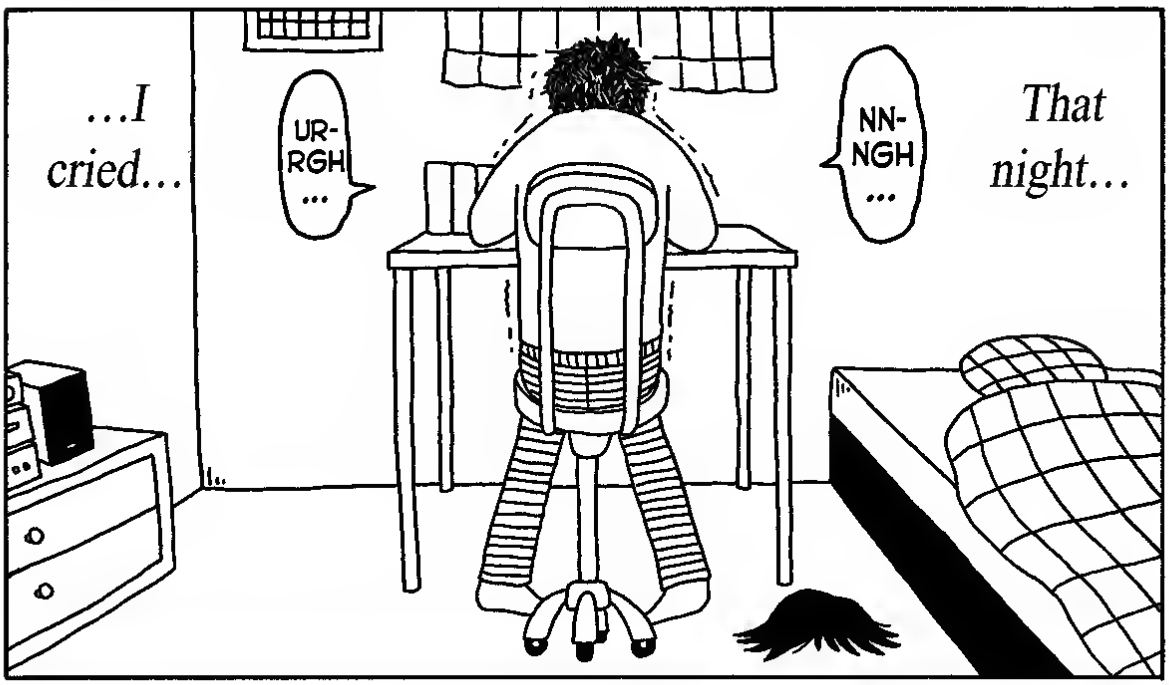
MM?


CAN WE DO IT?


...
STOP ...
...
I THINK I'LL WALK HOME AFTER ALL...
Swup
...
ha ha!
JUST KID-DING ...
SUZUKO... I'M SORRY...
DON'T APOLOGIZE!
PLEASE, JUST DON'T...

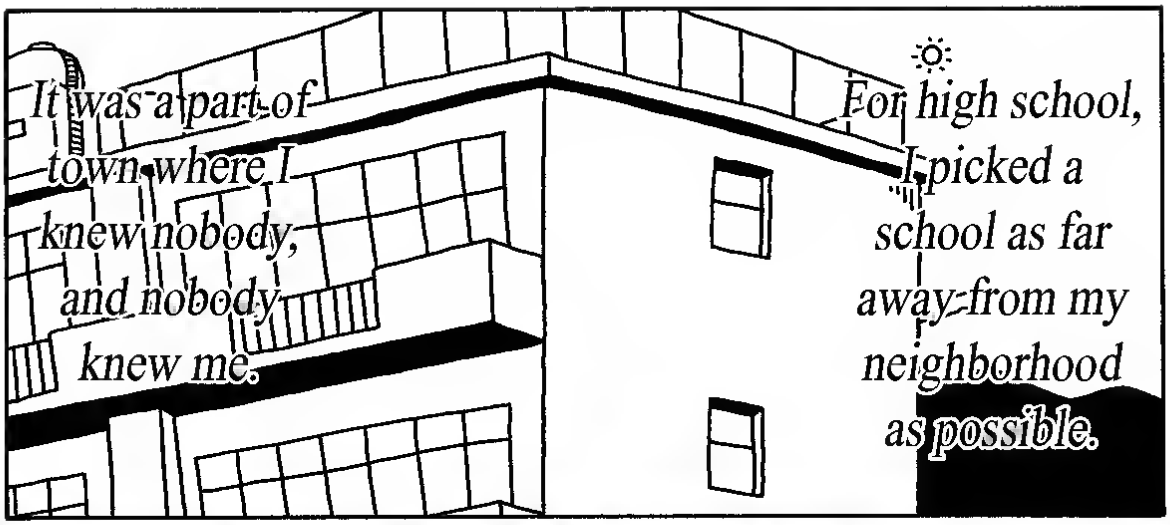

A
B
SUZUKO ...
FINE.
OVER AT SCHOOL...
Slrrrp
HOW'S IT GOING LATELY?
Chomp
Chomp
...
GOOD ...

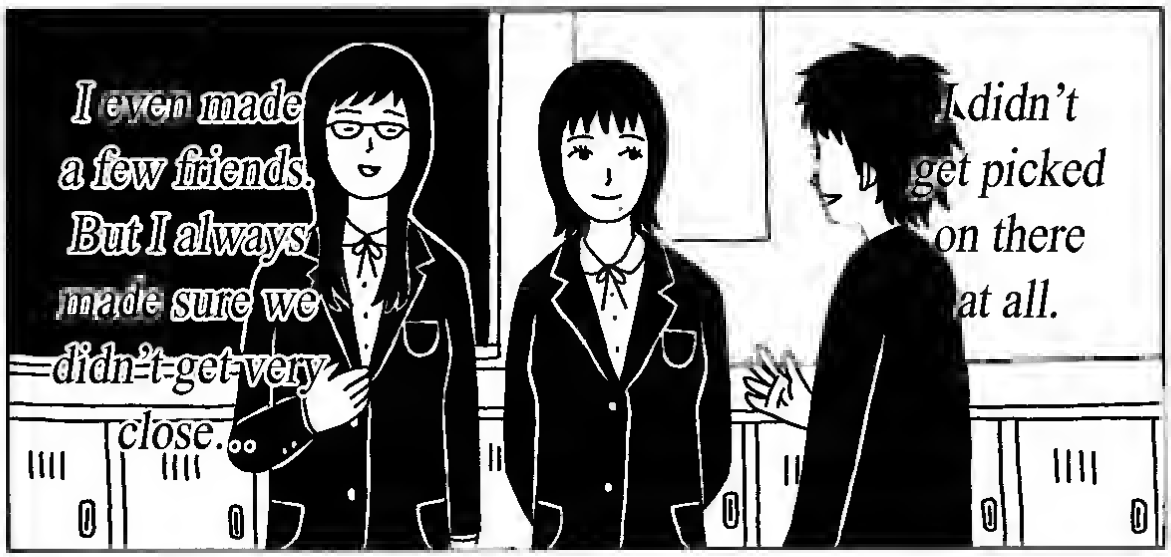

October
KRICH
KRICH
O
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
...
fwop
stop
...
ruffle
ruffle



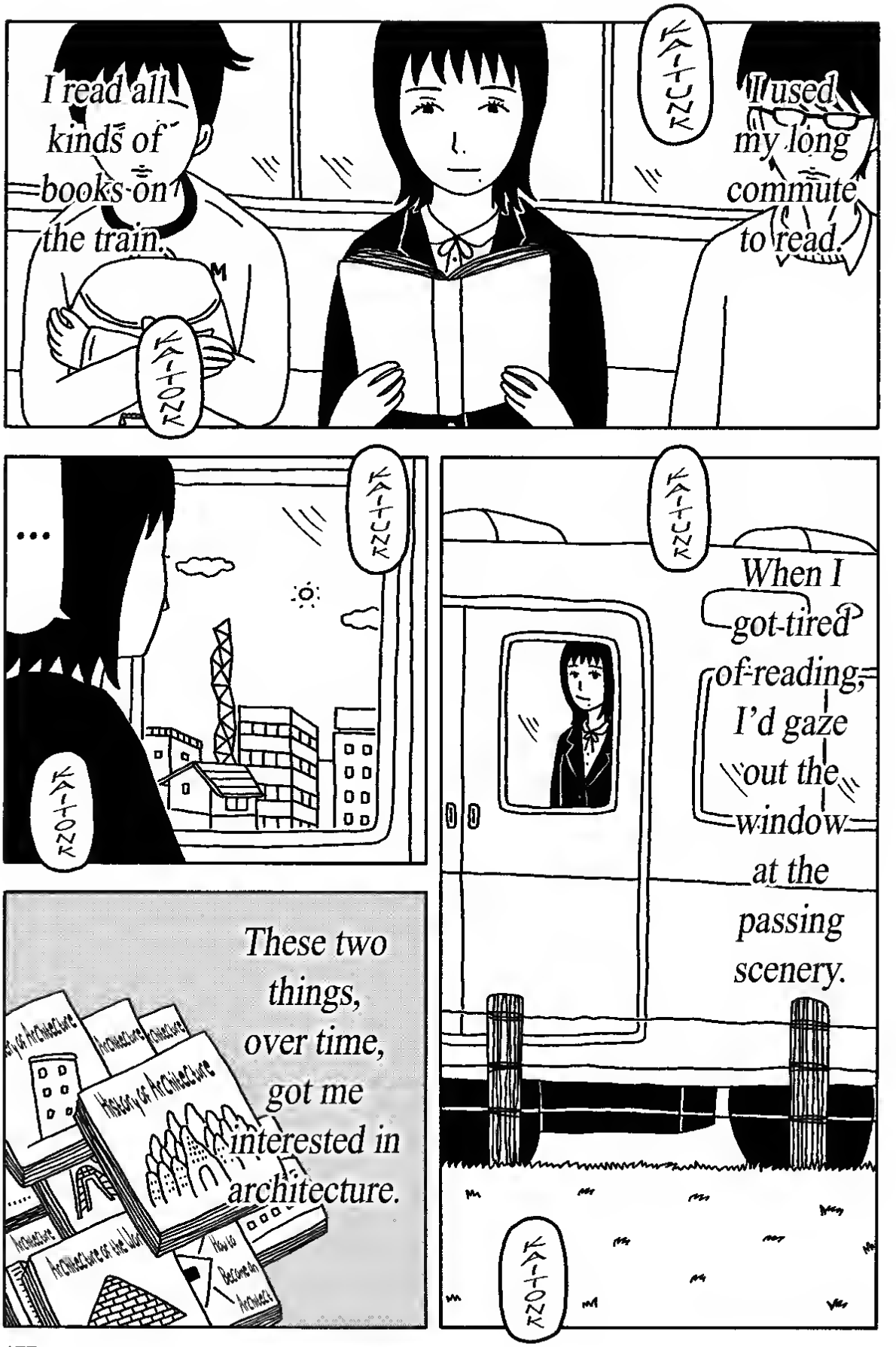
...enough for a whole lifetime.

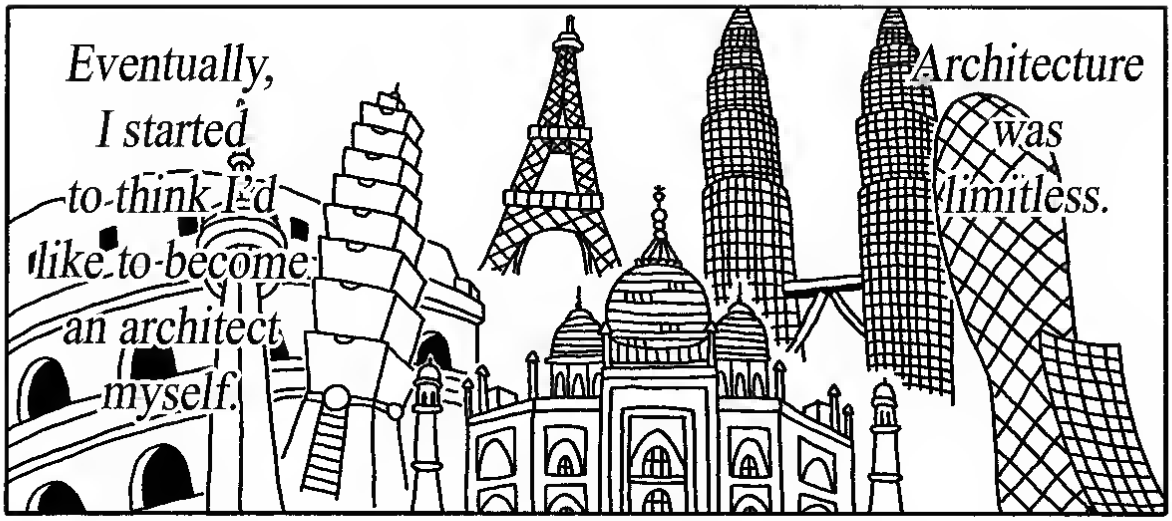
Final Chapter:
Suzuko—Part 2


It was a part of town where I knew nobody, and nobody knew me.
For high school, I picked a school as far away from my neighborhood as possible.


I even made a few friends. But I always made sure we didn't get very close...
I didn't get picked on there at all.

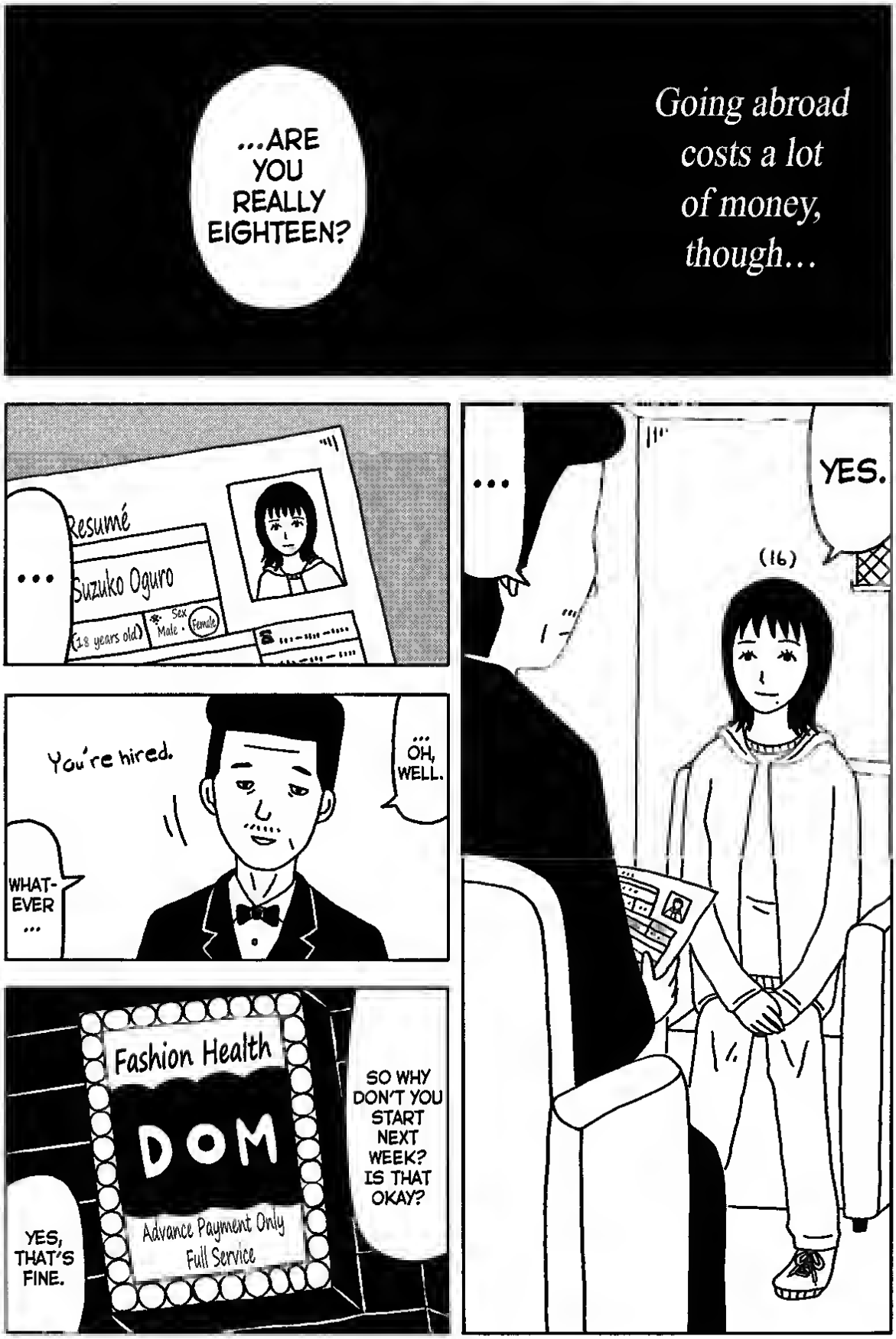
Afraid of getting hurt...
To be honest, I was afraid...

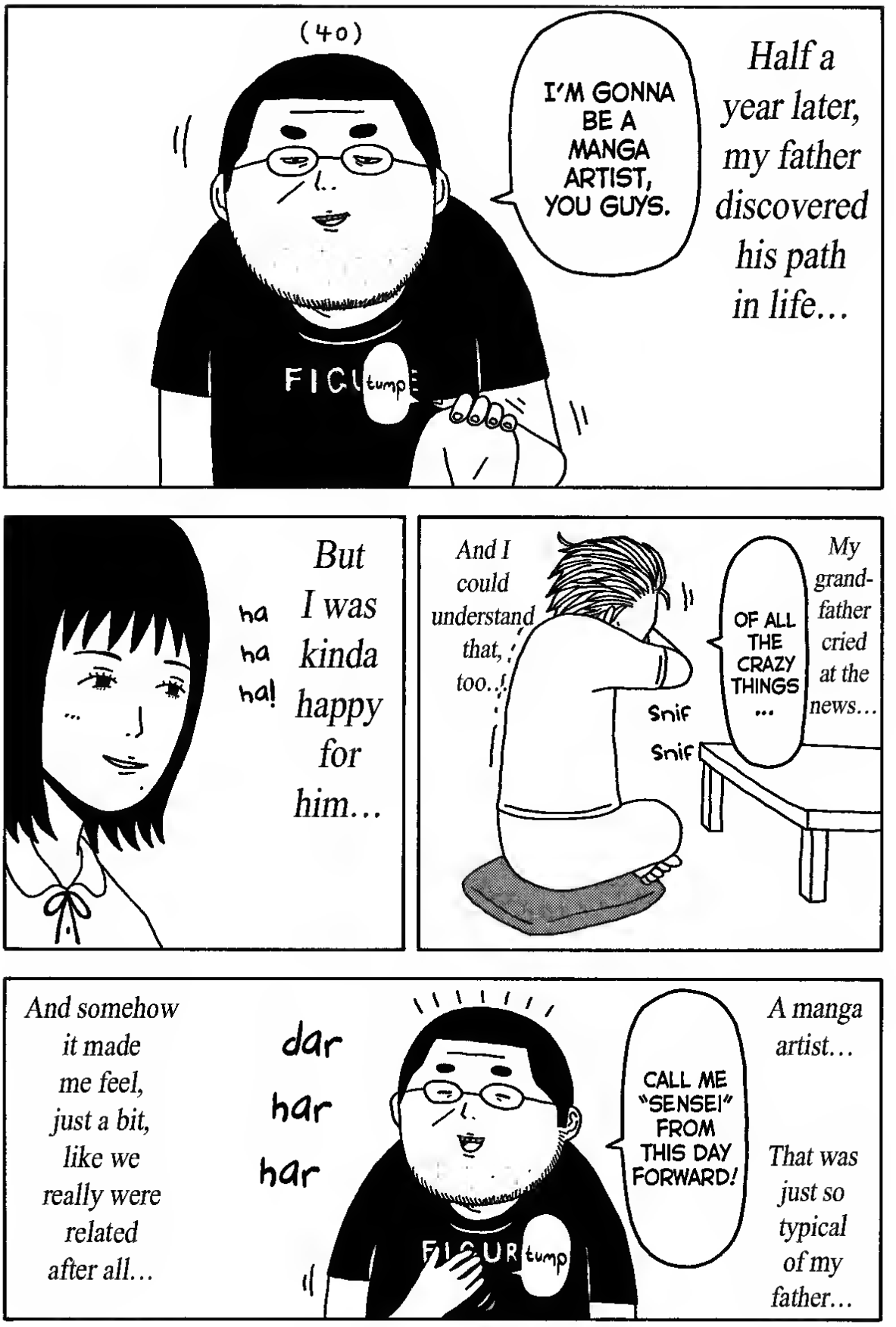

I read all kinds of books on the train.
KA-TUNK
I used my long commute to read.
KA-TUNK
...
KA-TUNK
KA-TUNK
When I got tired of reading, I'd gaze out the window at the passing scenery.
KA-TUNK
These two things, over time, got me interested in architecture.

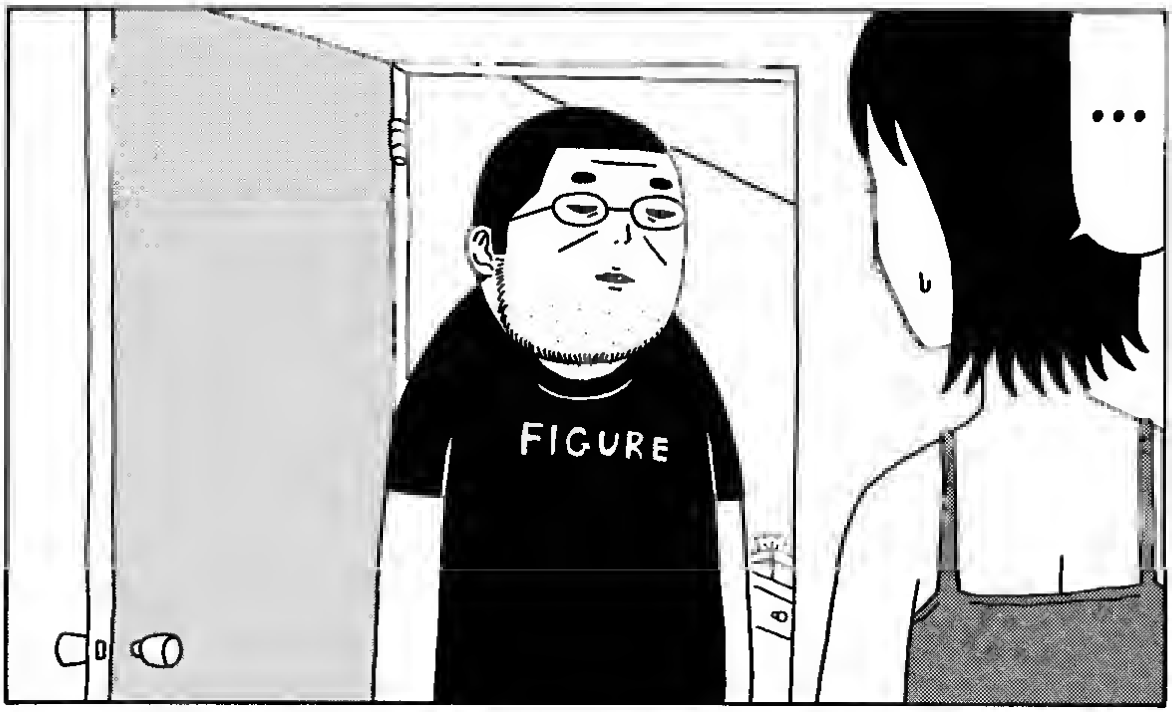

Eventually, I started to think I'd like to become an architect myself.
Architecture was limitless.

I felt like I'd finally found my path in life, and that made my heart dance.
Philosophy
Architecture
I yearned to take off and travel all over the world looking at buildings.

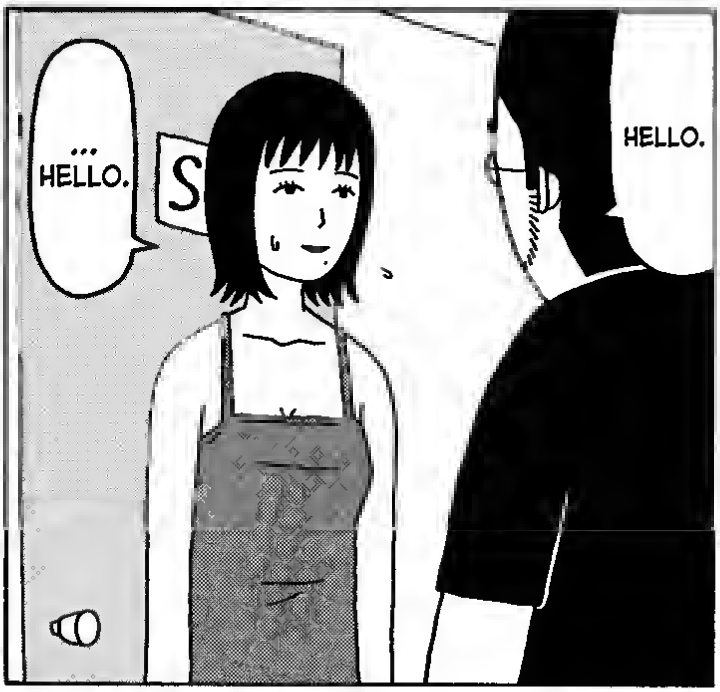
Maybe a part of me thought that leaving Japan would let me start over with a lot of things....
Life in Scandinavia
So I decided I would go abroad to study.
I settled on Finland.

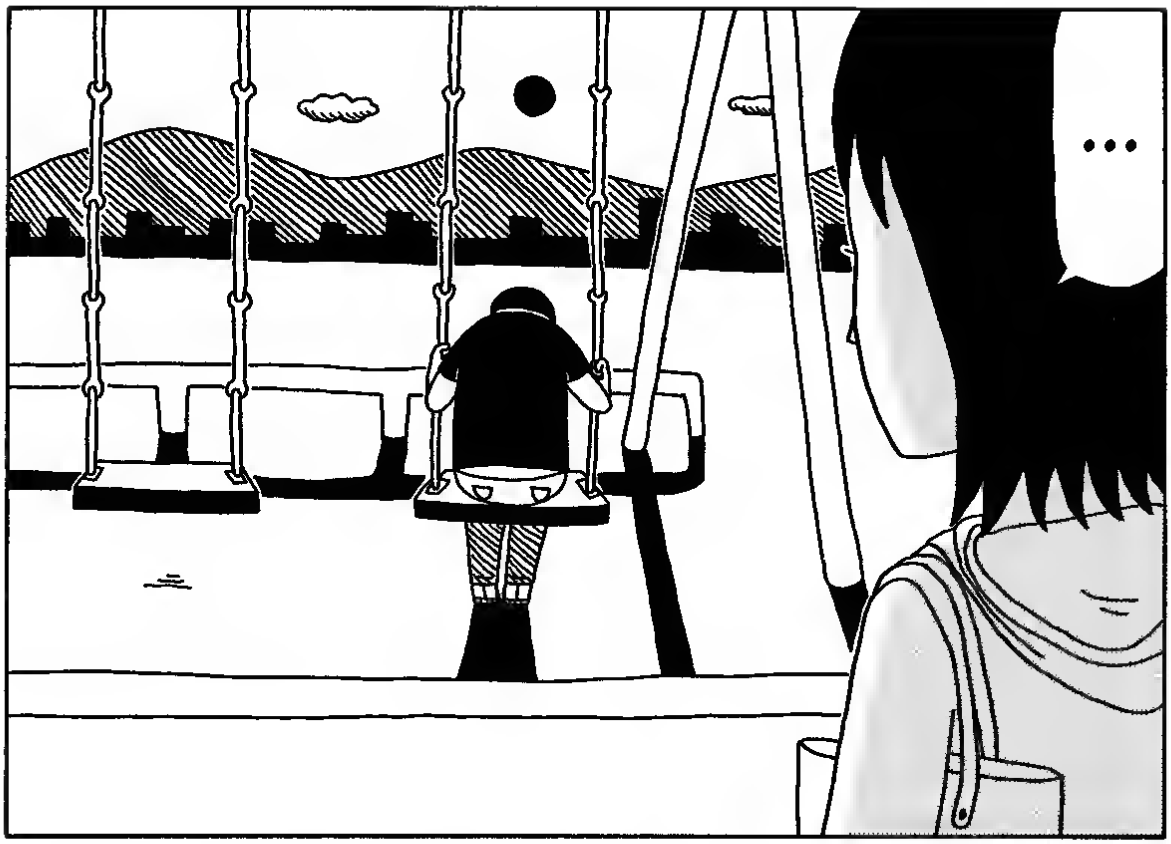

...ARE YOU REALLY EIGHTEEN?
Going abroad costs a lot of money, though...
Resumé
Suzuko Oguro
(18 years old)
Sex
Male · Female
...
You're hired.
...OH, WELL.
WHAT-EVER ...
Fashion Health
DOM
Advance Payment Only
Full Service
YES, THAT'S FINE.
SO WHY DON'T YOU START NEXT WEEK? IS THAT OKAY?
...
YES.
(16)

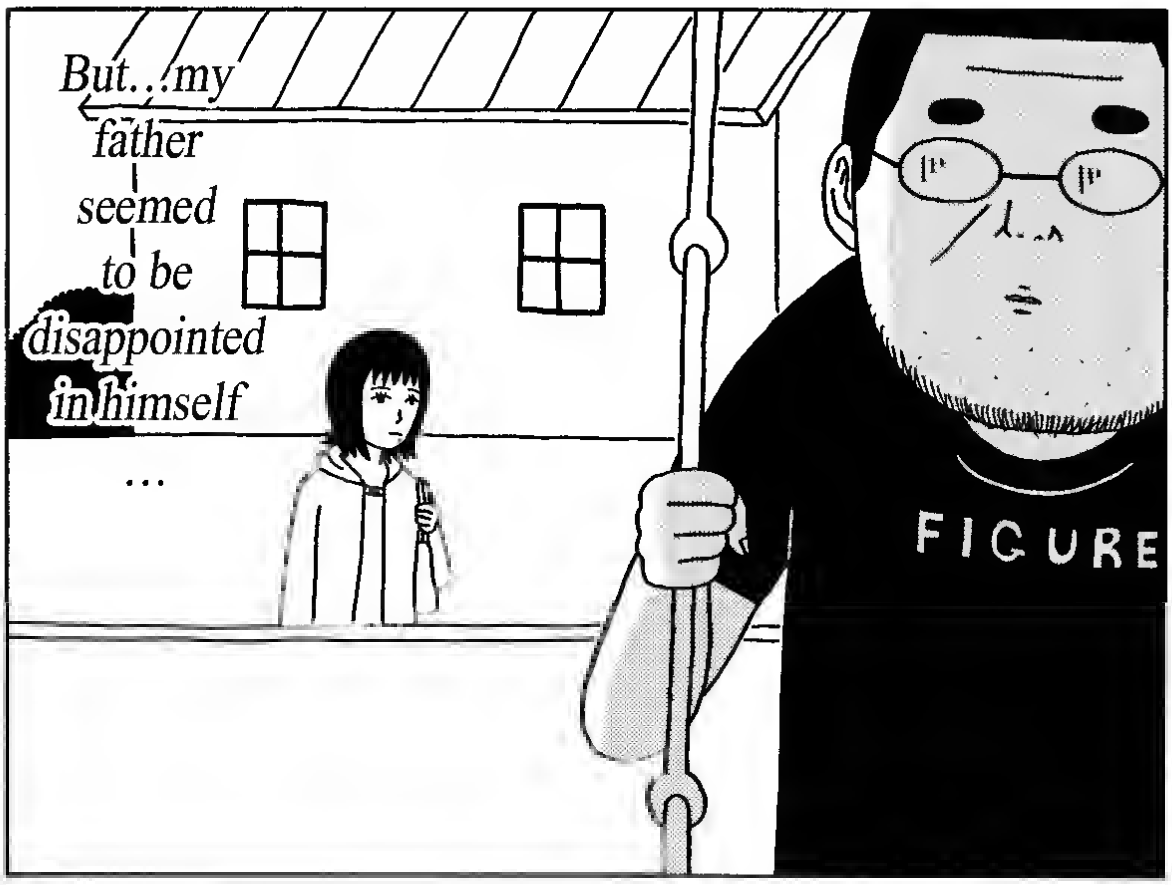

(40)
I'M GONNA BE A MANGA ARTIST, YOU GUYS.
Half a year later, my father discovered his path in life...
FIGU
tump
But I was kinda happy for him...
ha ha ha!
And I could understand that, too...!
OF ALL THE CRAZY THINGS ...
My grandfather cried at the news...
Snif
Snif
And somehow it made me feel, just a bit, like we really were related after all...
dar
har
har
CALL ME "SENSEI" FROM THIS DAY FORWARD!
A manga artist...
That was just so typical of my father...
FIGUR
tump

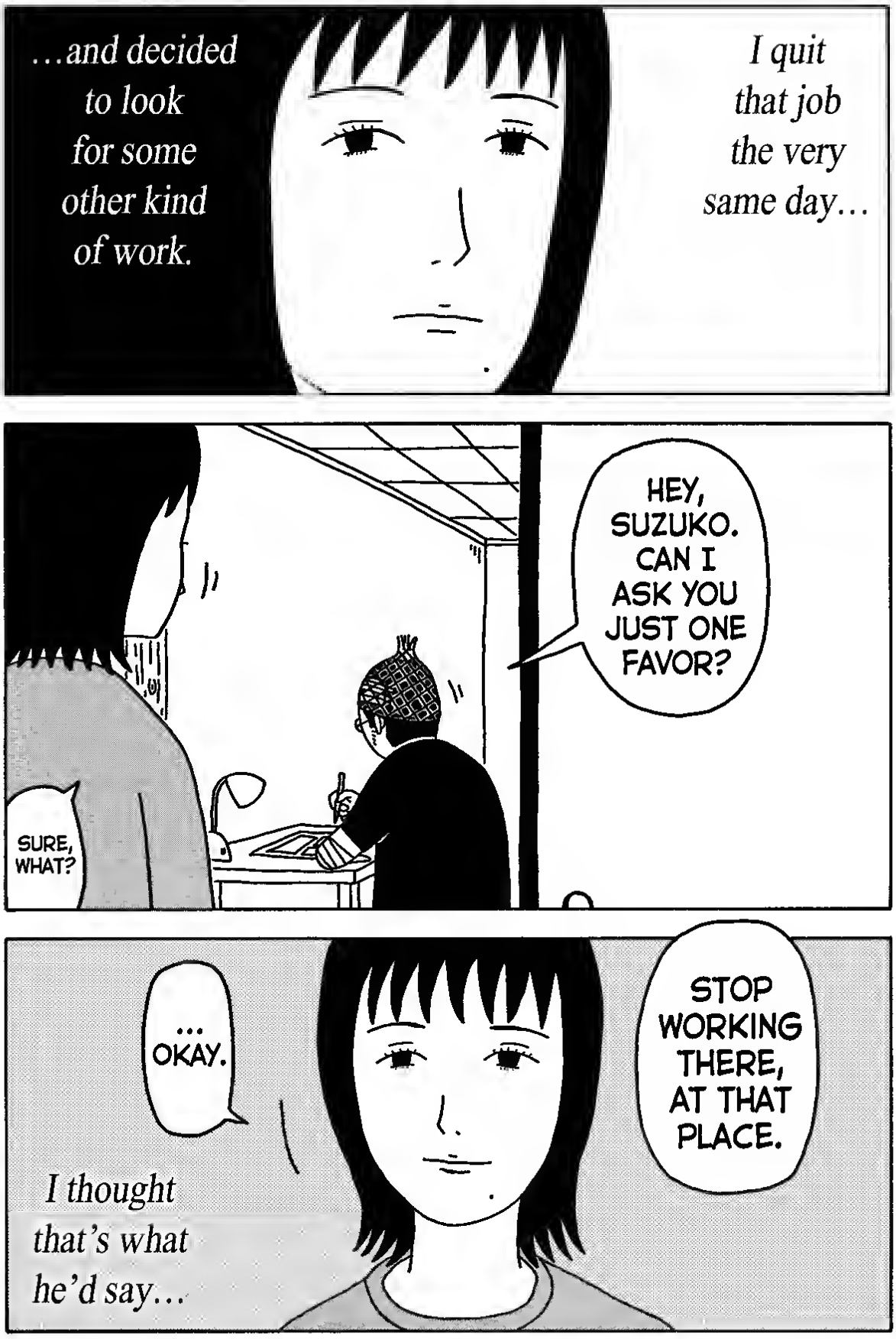


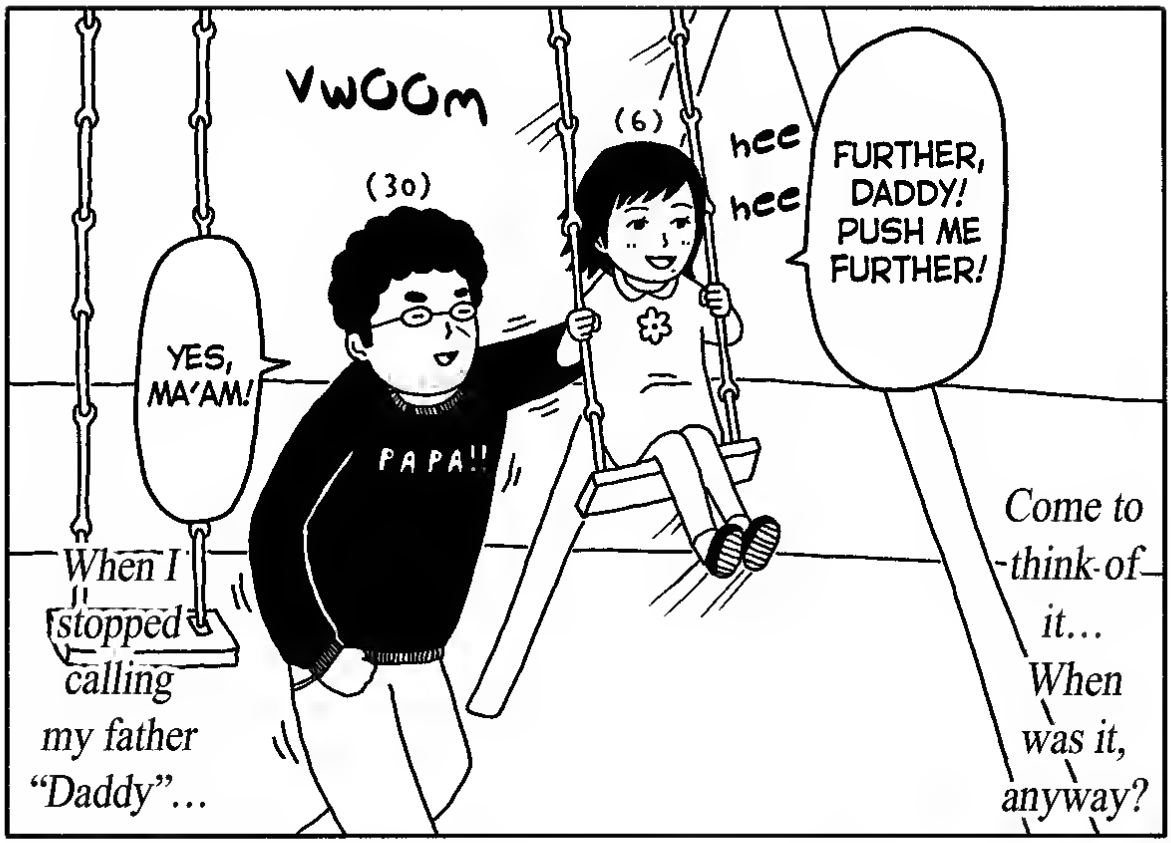
I thought he must be really disappointed in me…




...

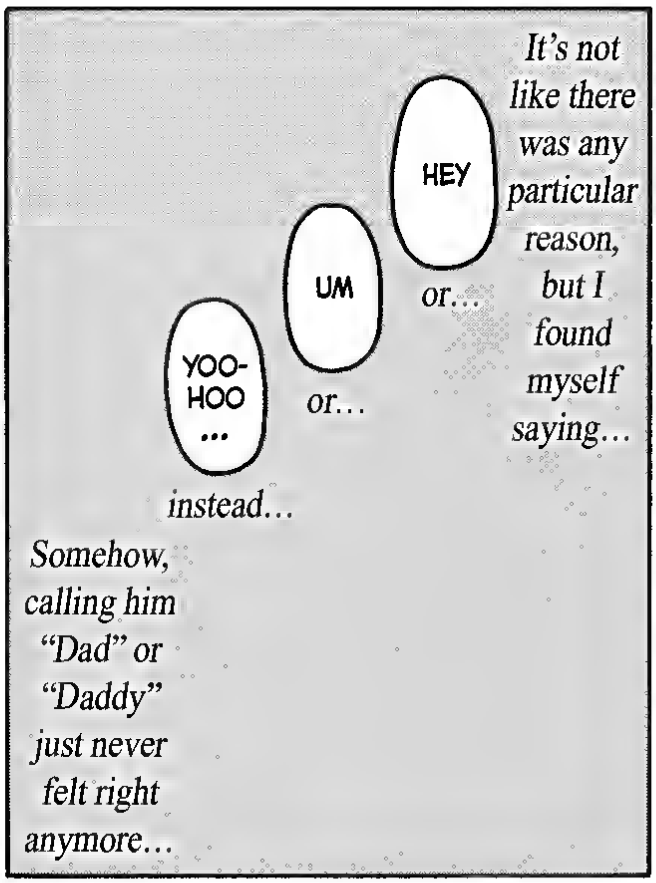

But...my father seemed to be disappointed in himself ...
FIGURE

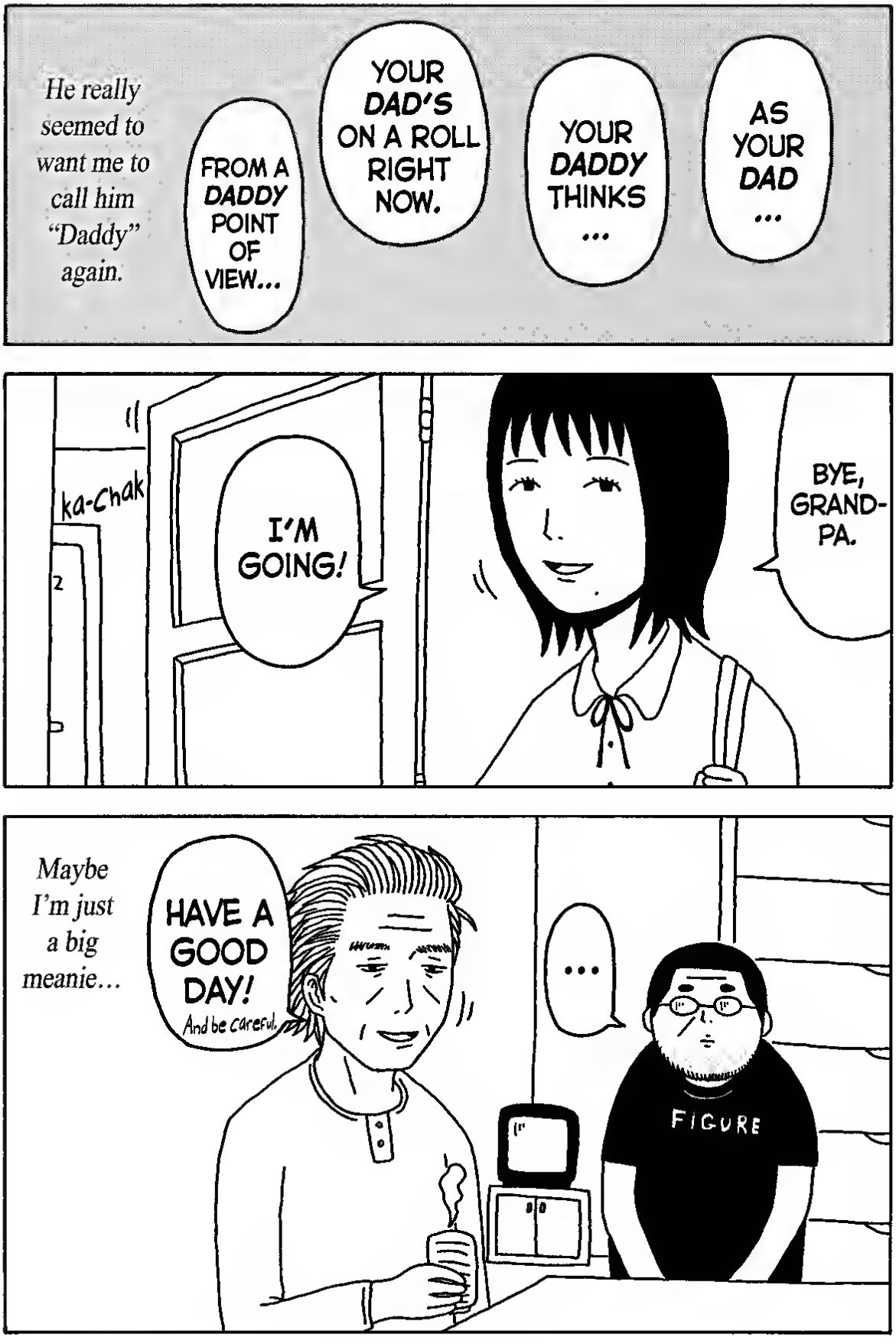

…and decided to look for some other kind of work.
I quit that job the very same day…
HEY, SUZUKO. CAN I ASK YOU JUST ONE FAVOR?
SURE, WHAT?
STOP WORKING THERE, AT THAT PLACE.
…OKAY.
I thought that's what he'd say…

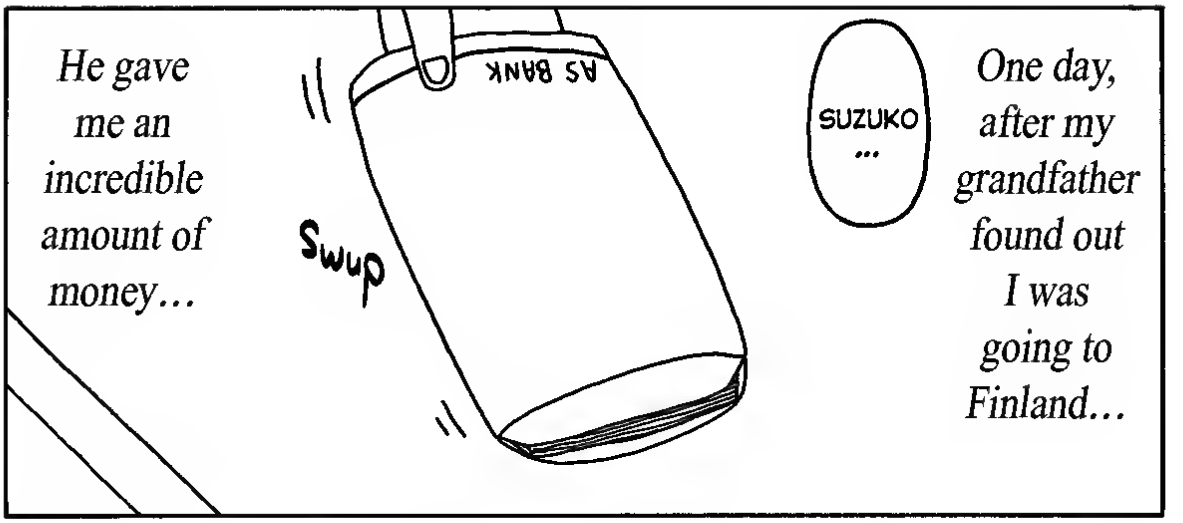

VWOOM
(30)
(6)
hee hee
FURTHER, DADDY! PUSH ME FURTHER!
YES, MA'AM!
PAPA!!
When I stopped calling my father "Daddy"...
Come to think of it... When was it, anyway?

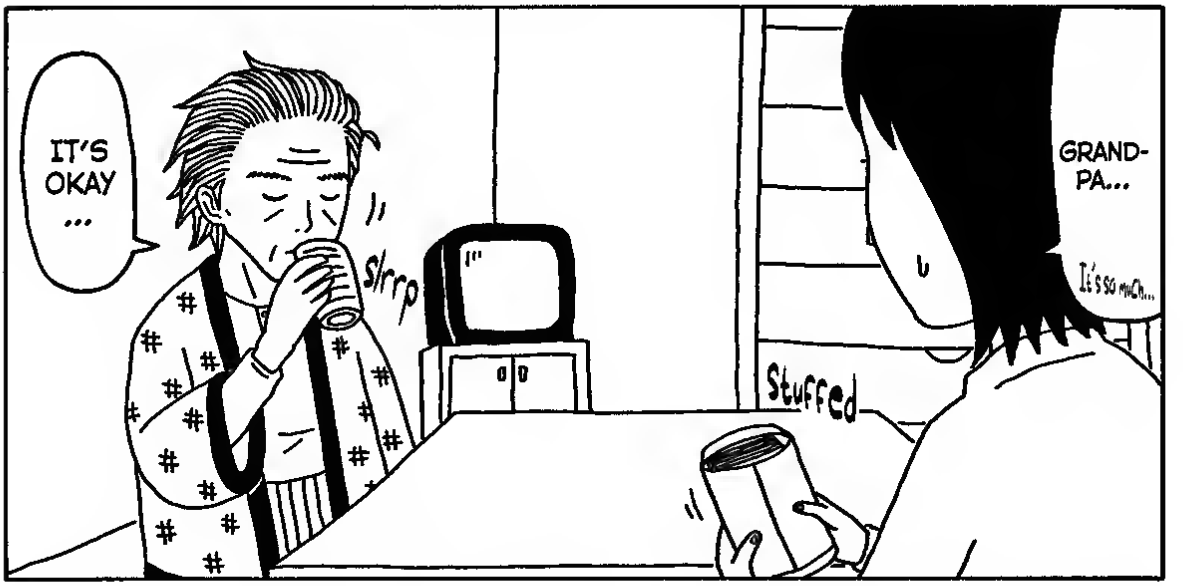
...
I think it really bothered my father a lot...

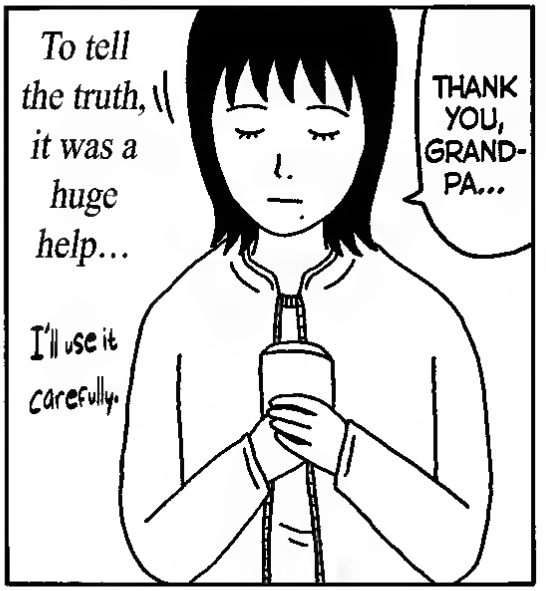
SUZ-UKO ...

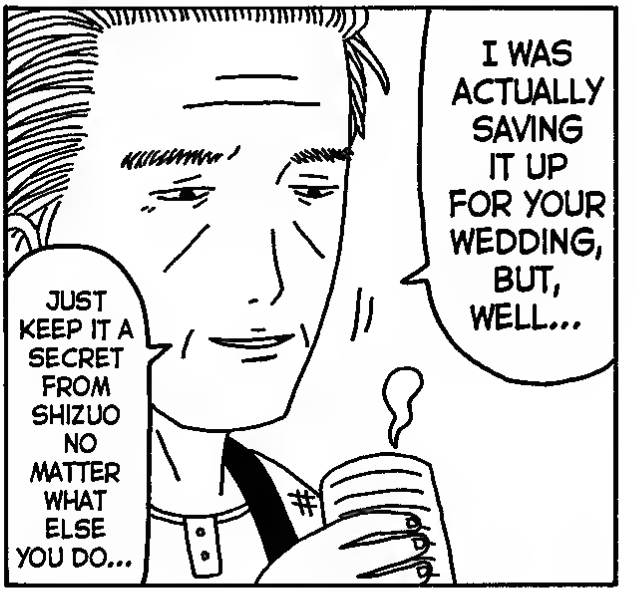

It's not like there was any particular reason, but I found myself saying...
HEY
or...
UM
or...
YOO-HOO ...
instead...
Somehow, calling him "Dad" or "Daddy" just never felt right anymore...

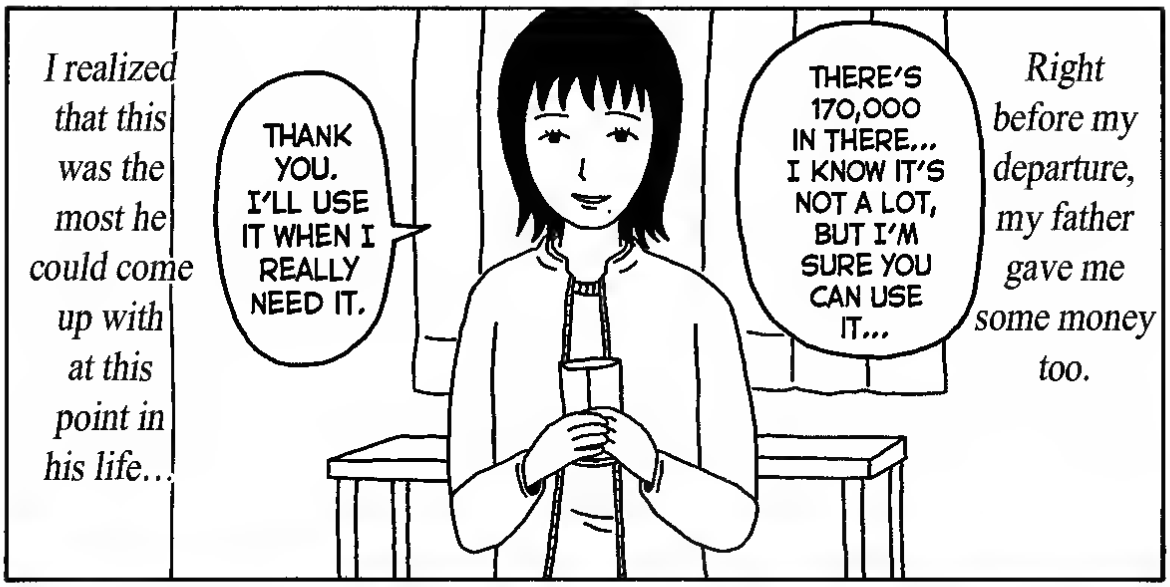

He really seemed to want me to call him "Daddy" again.
FROM A DADDY POINT OF VIEW...
YOUR DAD'S ON A ROLL RIGHT NOW.
YOUR DADDY THINKS ...
AS YOUR DAD ...
ka-chak
I'M GOING!
BYE, GRAND-PA.
Maybe I'm just a big meanie...
HAVE A GOOD DAY!
And be careful.
...
FIGURE

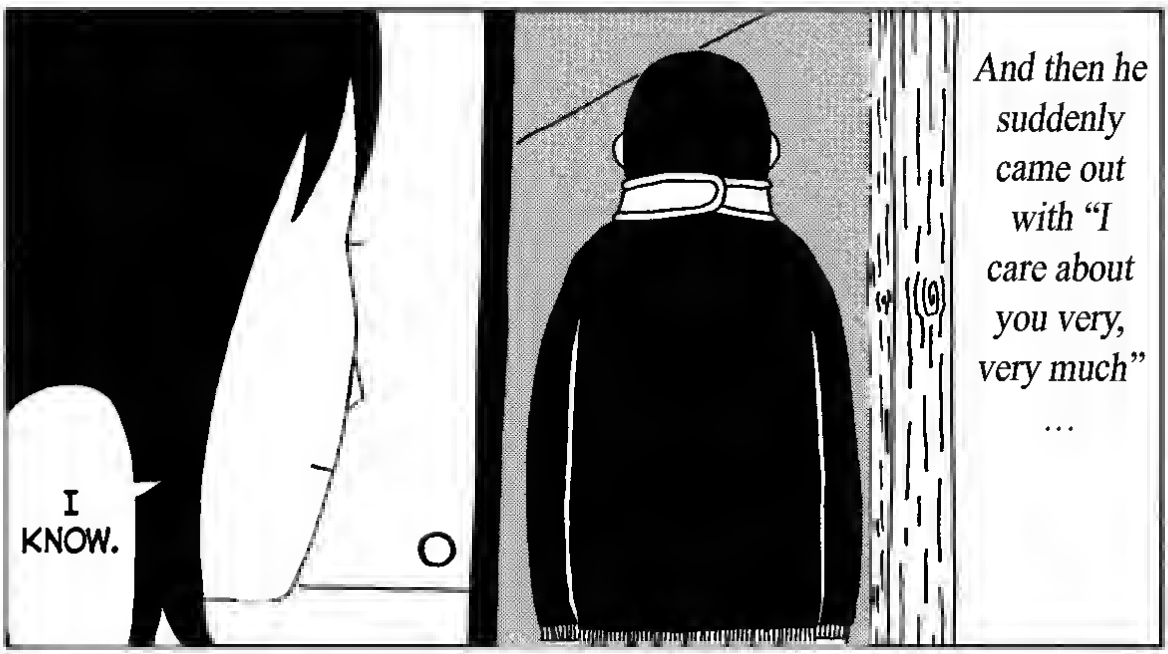

He gave me an incredible amount of money...
AS BANK
Swup
SUZUKO ...
One day, after my grandfather found out I was going to Finland...


IT'S OKAY ...
S/rrp
GRAND-PA...
It's so much...
Stuffed


To tell the truth, it was a huge help...
I'll use it carefully.
THANK YOU, GRAND-PA...


I WAS ACTUALLY SAVING IT UP FOR YOUR WEDDING, BUT, WELL...
JUST KEEP IT A SECRET FROM SHIZUO NO MATTER WHAT ELSE YOU DO...


I realized that this was the most he could come up with at this point in his life...
THANK YOU. I'LL USE IT WHEN I REALLY NEED IT.
THERE'S 170,000 IN THERE... I KNOW IT'S NOT A LOT, BUT I'M SURE YOU CAN USE IT...
Right before my departure, my father gave me some money too.


I KNOW.
And then he suddenly came out with "I care about you very, very much" ...

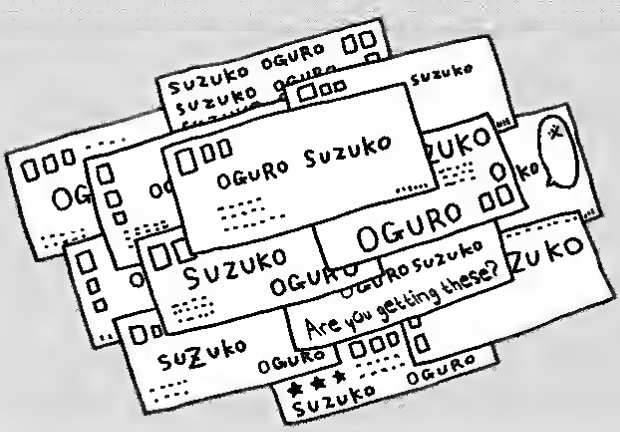
That was the last time my father and I talked to each other...
I WILL. THANKS.
KEEP YOUR CHIN UP OVER THERE, SUZUKO ...
OKAY ...
I KNEW THAT ...
I knew how much he cared about me...

klik

Finland was a lot colder than I'd expected, but the landscapes and buildings were really beautiful.

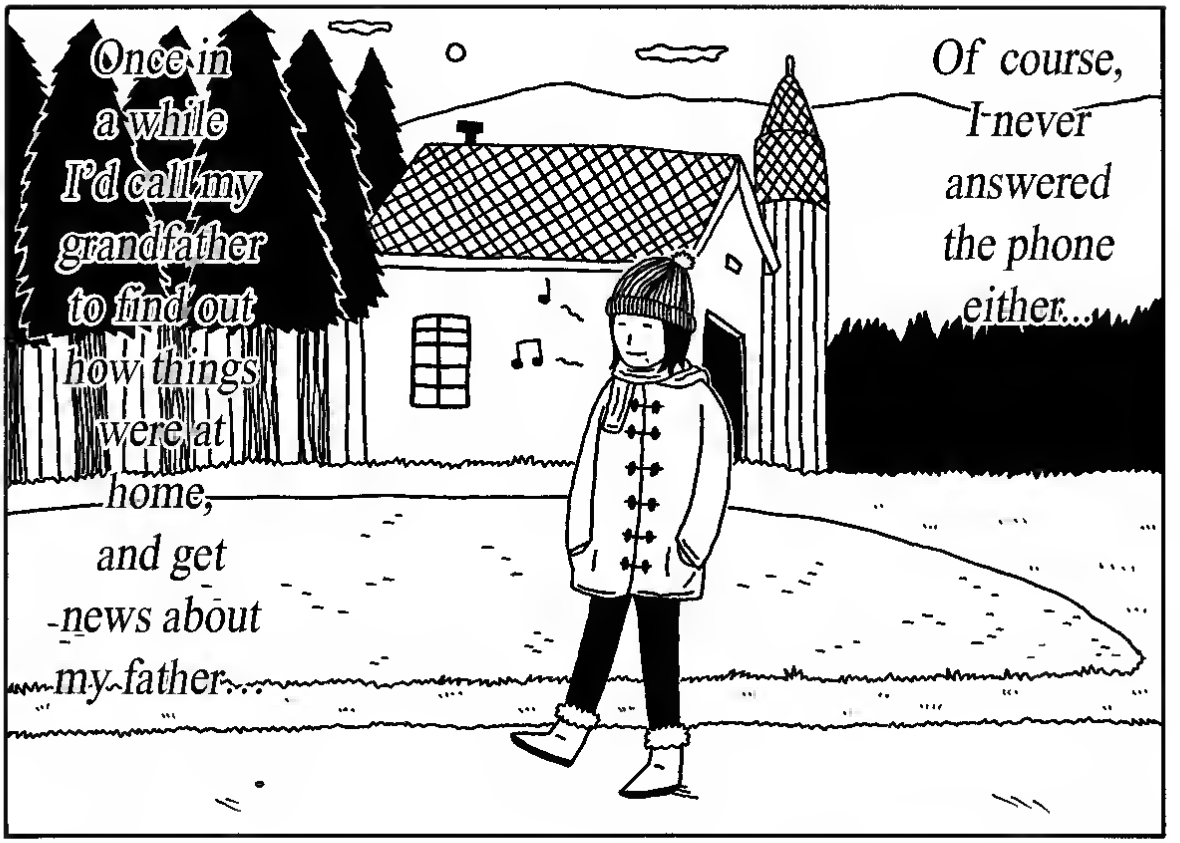
Leaving Japan was the right thing to do.

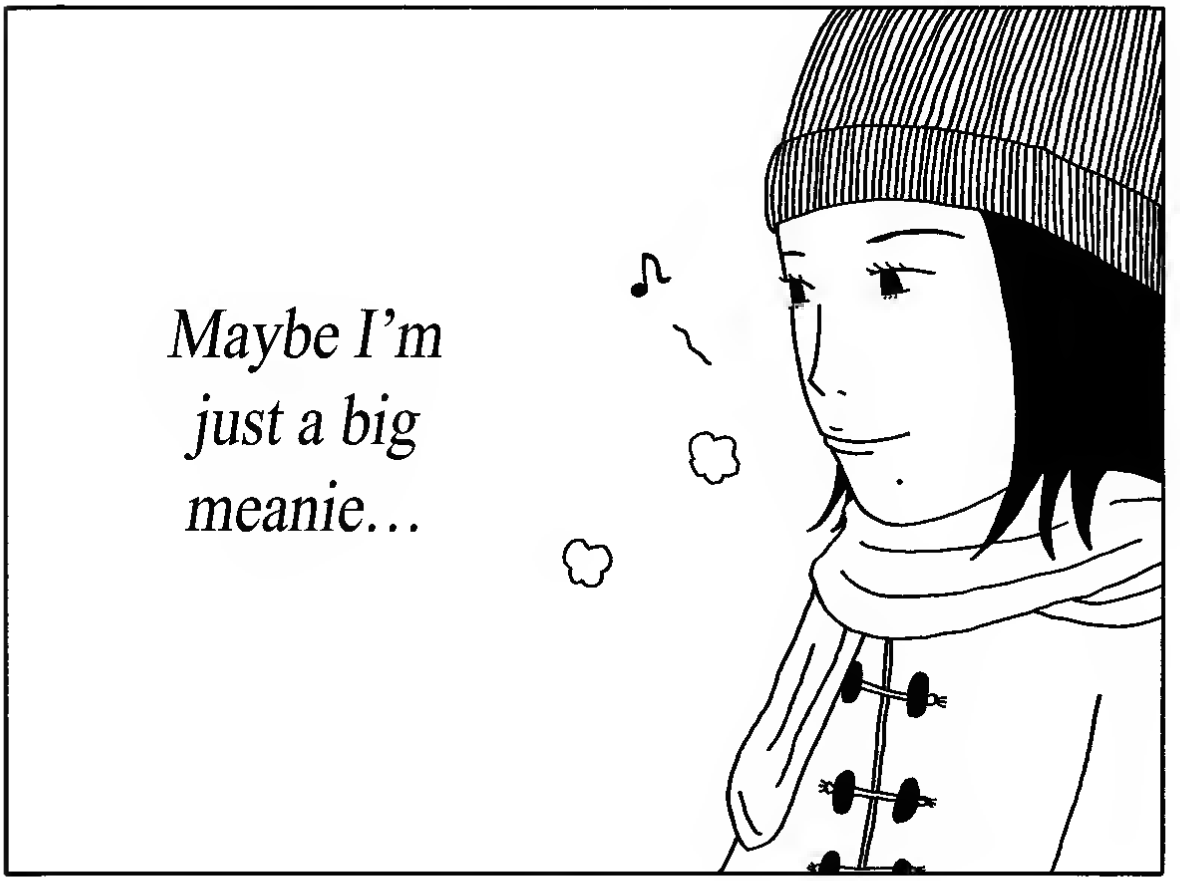
But I didn't answer a single one…



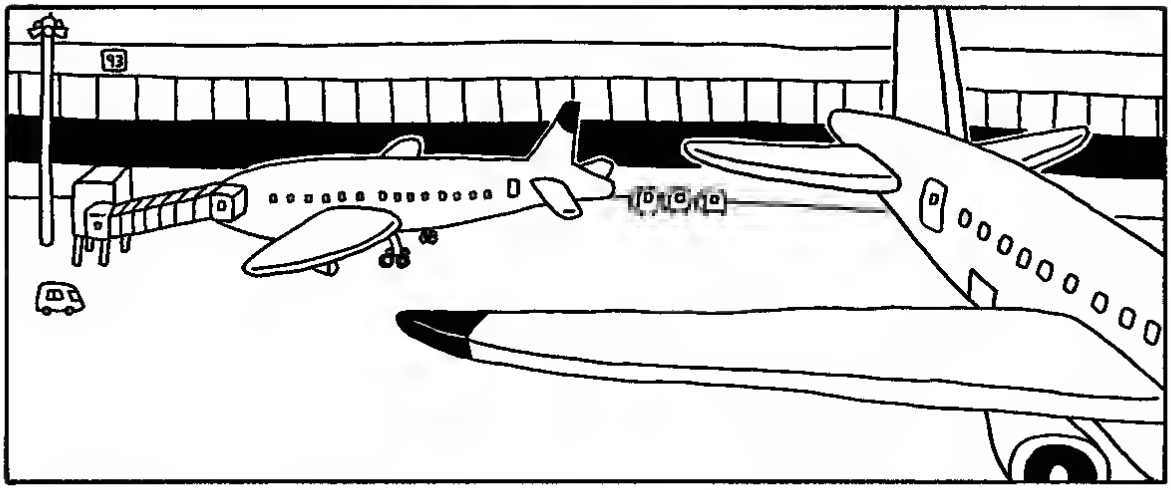
I received a ton of letters from my father while I was there

…


Once in a while I'd call my grandfather to find out how things were at home, and get news about my father...
Of course, I never answered the phone either...

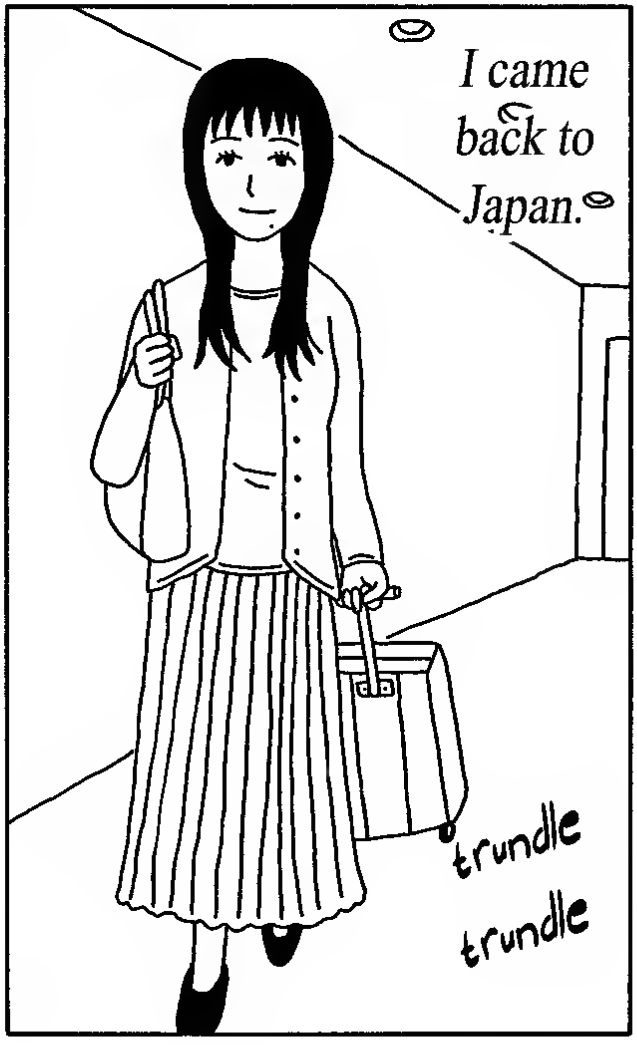

Maybe I'm just a big meanie...

Five years later…

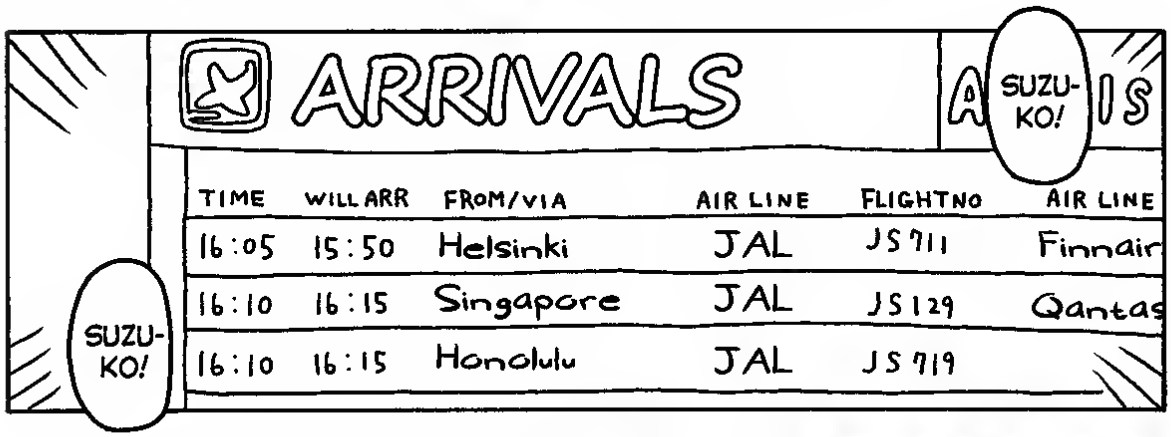


I think I'll move back in with my father and grandfather.

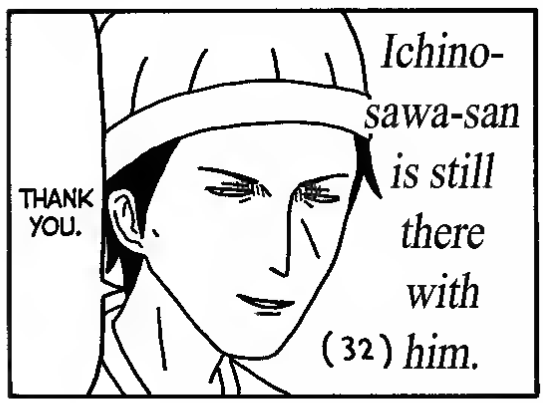
I can work as an architect while living with them…

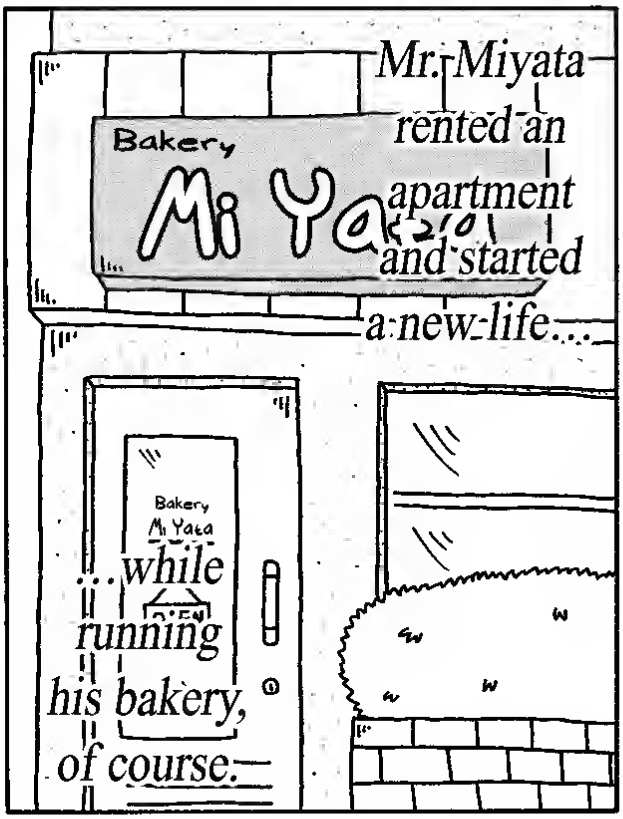


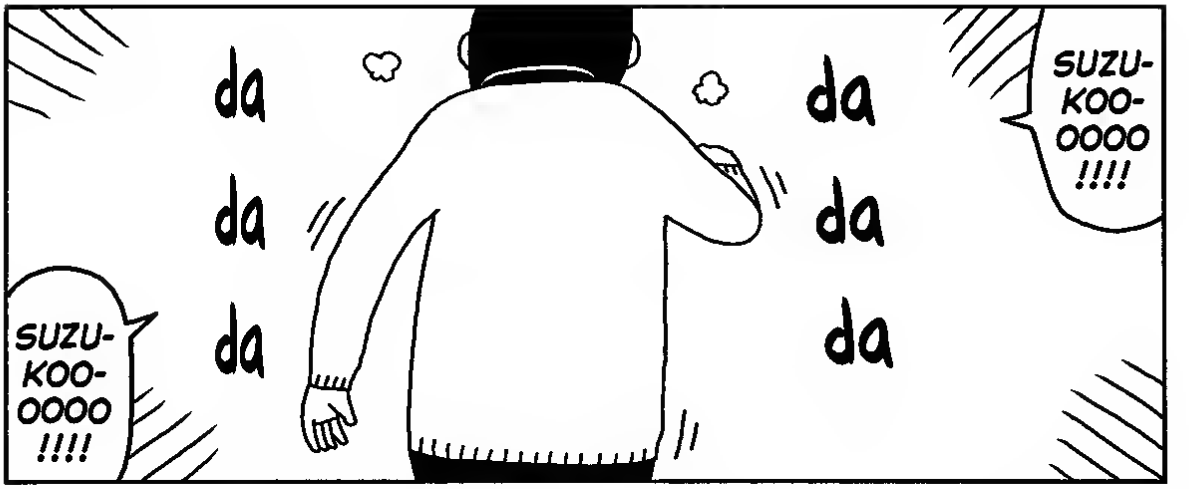
WE'VE ORDERED SOME REALLY GOOD SUSHI FOR YOU TO EAT.
(77)
My grandfather's doing really well, as always.


ARRIVALS
SUZU-KO!
SUZU-KO!
TIME WILL ARR FROM/VIA AIR LINE FLIGHT NO AIR LINE
16:05 15:50 Helsinki JAL JS 711 Finnair
16:10 16:15 Singapore JAL JS 129 Qantas
16:10 16:15 Honolulu JAL JS 719

WEL-COME!
(47)

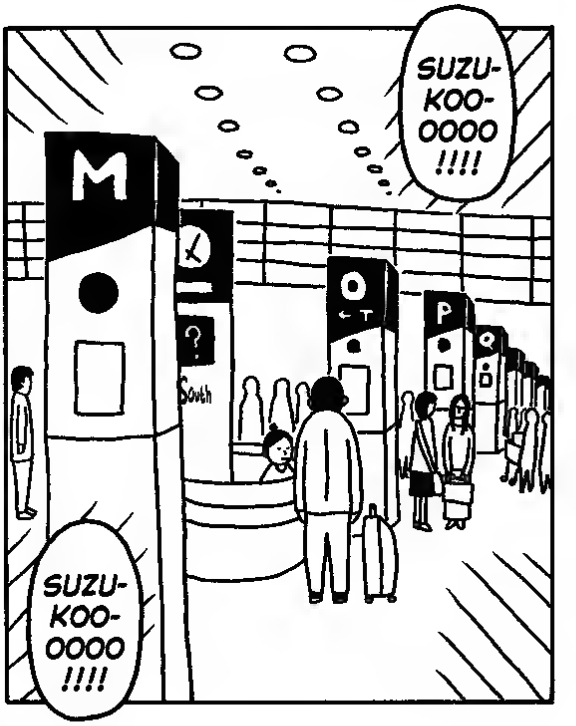

THANK YOU.
Ichino-sawa-san is still there with him.
(32)

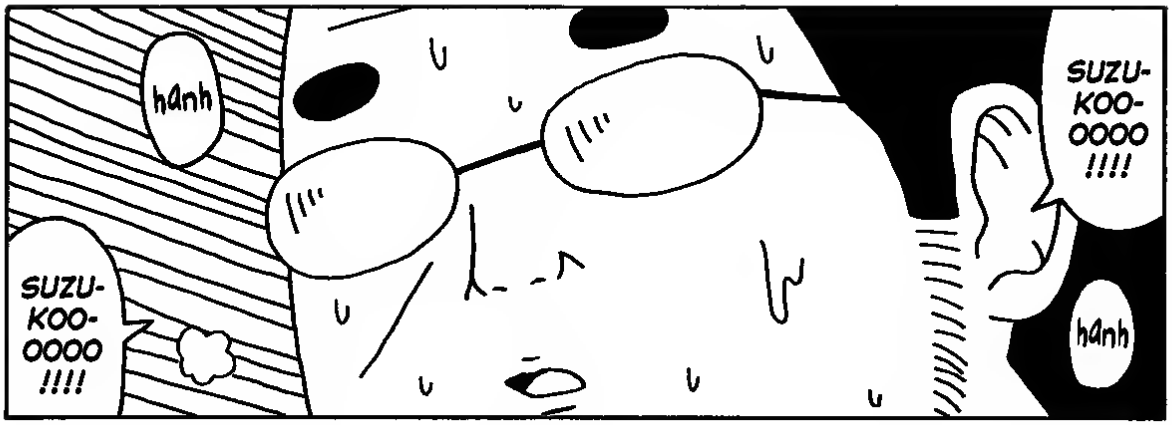

Mr. Miyata rented an apartment and started a new life...
Bakery
Mi Yata
...while running his bakery, of course.

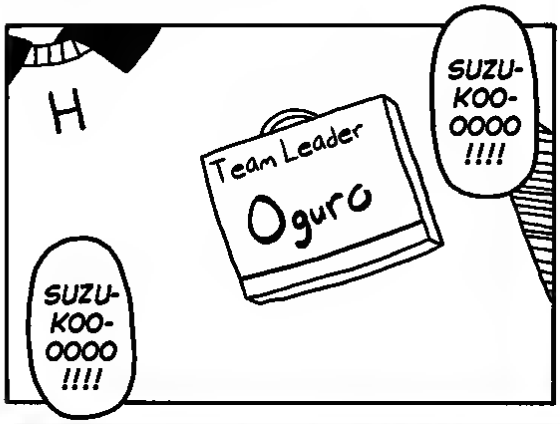

da
da
da
da
da
da
SUZU-KOO-OOOO !!!!
SUZU-KOO-OOOO !!!!

I KNOW.

I REALLY DON'T KNOW. SO GET PUBLISHED AND WE'LL FIND OUT.


SUZU-KOO-OOOO !!!!
M
South
SUZU-KOO-OOOO !!!!



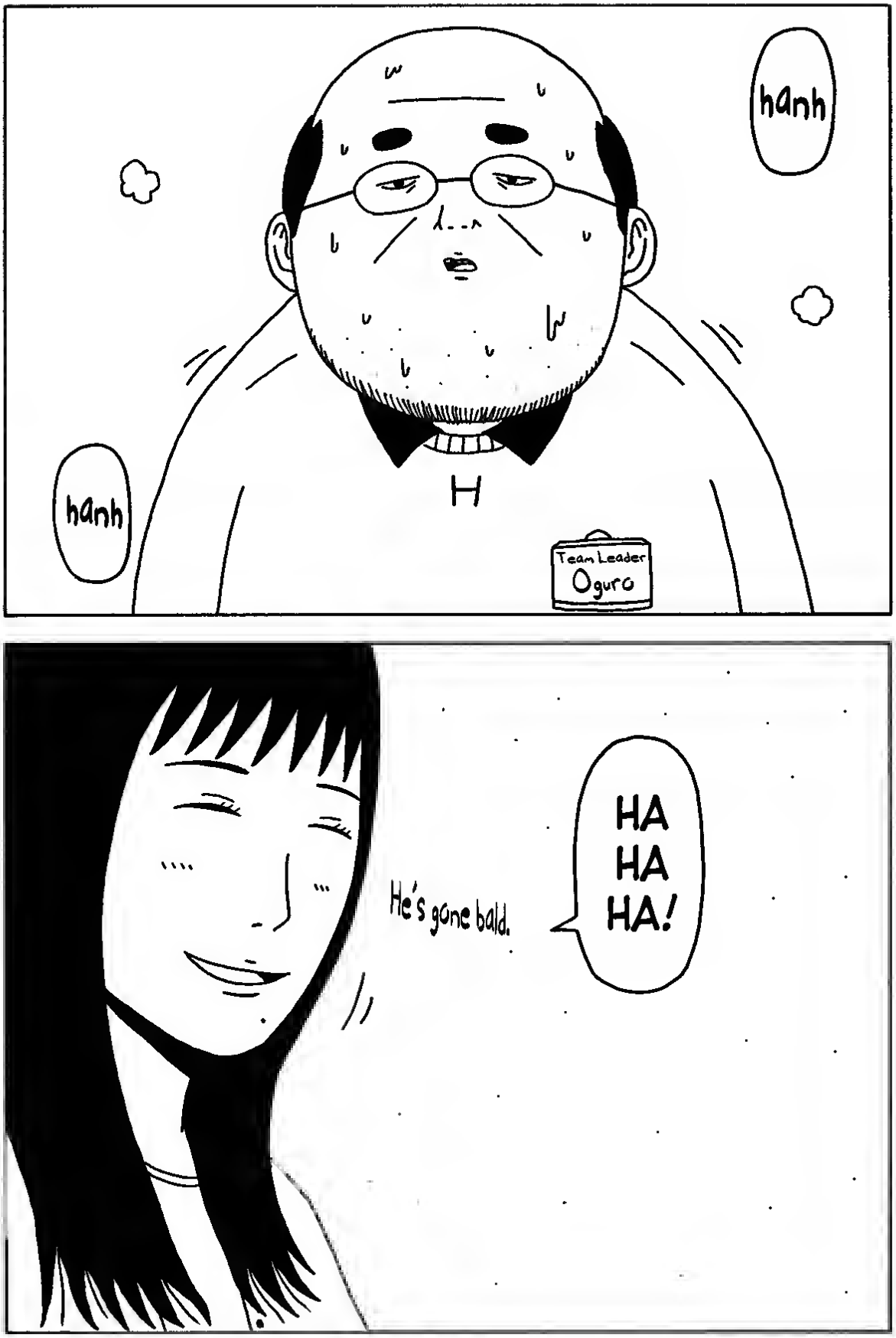


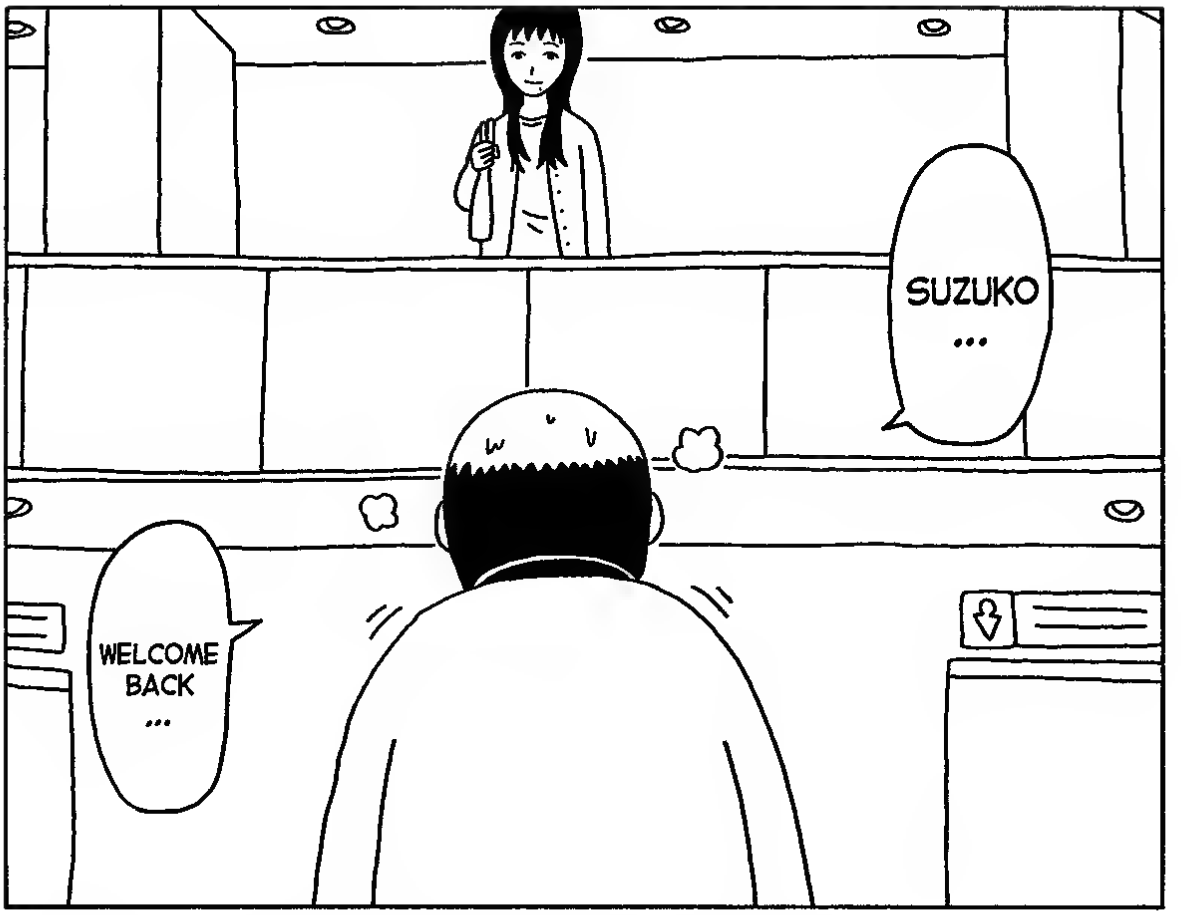
And my father...

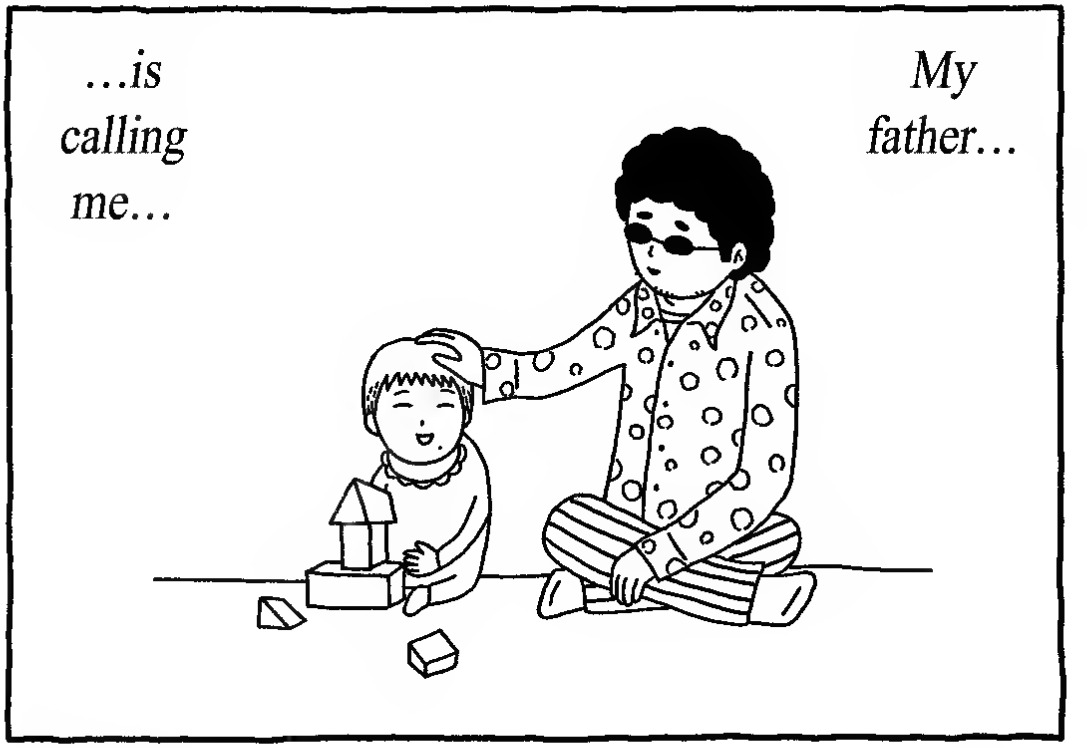
...is still trying to make it as a manga artist.

SUZUKOOOOOO!!!

(23)
(47)


hanh
hanh
H
Team Leader
Oguro
He's gone bald.
HA
HA
HA!


SUZUKO
...
WELCOME BACK
...


...is calling me...
My father...

...
DAD.

The End

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL... TOMORROW

Volume 5

VIZ Signature Edition

Story & Art by SHUNJU AONO

ORE WA MADA HONKI DASHITE NAI DAKE Vol. 5
by Shunju AONO
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